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Convention to Combat Desertification

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Item 7 (a) and (b) of the provisional agenda[1]

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION

(a) REVIEW OF REPORTS ON IMPLEMENTATION OF AFFECTED COUNTRY PARTIES OF REGIONS OTHER THAN AFRICA, INCLUDING ON THE PARTICIPATORY PROCESS, AND ON EXPERIENCE GAINED AND RESULTS ACHIEVED IN THE PREPARATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF NATIONAL ACTION PROGRAMMES

(b) REVIEW OF THE REPORT ON PROGRESS MADE IN THE FORMULATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF SUBREGIONAL AND REGIONAL ACTION PROGRAMMES IN REGIONS OTHER THAN AFRICA

Addendum

COMPILATION OF SUMMARIES OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY NORTHERN MEDITERRANEAN AND OTHER AFFECTED COUNTRY PARTIES[2]

Note by the secretariat

1. By its decision 4/COP.3, the Conference of the Parties (COP) decided to undertake, at its fourth session, the review of reports on the implementation of affected country Parties of regions other than Africa, including reports on the participatory process and on experiences gained and results achieved in the preparation and implementation of national action programmes.

2. Pursuant to decision 11/COP.1, the secretariat was requested to compile the summaries of reports submitted by affected country Parties and submit the compilation to the Conference of the Parties for consideration and for any action the COP may wish to take. Decision 11/COP.1 also provided procedures and formats for reporting to the COP and required, in particular, a summary of the national reports, not to exceed six pages.

3. The present document contains the summaries of national reports submitted by five country Parties from the Northern Mediterranean Region and five from other affected country Parties. These are: Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain and Turkey as well as Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Republic of Moldova and Romania.

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[1] ICCD/COP(4)/1.

[2] Reproduced without formal editing.

A summary from the Group of Annex IV Countries report follows. The secretariat will also make this compilation of summaries available on its Web site (www.unccd.int) for wider circulation. The synthesis of these national reports can be found in ICCD/COP(4)/Add.3 (B) and the full regional report in its annex.

CONTENTS

		Page
I.	NORTHERN MEDITERRANEAN AFFECTED COUNTRY PARTIES	3
	Greece	3
	Italy	4
	Portugal	6
	Spain	6
	Turkey	10
II.	OTHER AFFECTED COUNTRY PARTIES	12
	Armenia	12
	Azerbaijan	15
	Georgia	19
	Republic of Moldova	24
	Romania	27
III.	GROUP OF ANNEX IV COUNTRIES	29

I. NORTHERN MEDITERRANEAN AFFECTED COUNTRY PARTIES

GREECE

In the context of the fight against desertification, Greece signed the Desertification Convention on 14 October 1994 and ratified it on 6 March 1997.

Greece's geographical position and variations in climate and biotypes give a special character to the country's flora, fauna and habitats. Greek flora and fauna are among the richest in Europe. Since ancient times, human action has greatly transformed the natural environment in Greece. As a result of over-exploitation of soil, water and vegetation resources, large areas of the country are threatened by desertification.

During the last years, Greece has made a significant effort to protect its natural environment and adopt a sustainable development model. In this context, Greece has signed and ratified all major international conventions on the environment. The country's participation in the European Union as a full member since 1981, resulted in the integration and implementation in the national law of the legislation produced by the Union's competent services. The European Union's policies and strategies for sustainable development and environmental protection are therefore a part of the nation's development policy. Through the Community Support Frameworks and the Cohesion Fund, many actions and measures regarding sustainability and environmental protection have been funded.

National and Regional Planning will play a crucial role in the fight against desertification in the long term, following the recent passing of a new law on planning and sustainable development.

Regarding the institutional measures taken to implement the Desertification Convention, the following are mentioned:

- The ratification of the Convention;
- The establishment of the National Committee to Combat Desertification (NCCD), its tasks, composition and mode of operation;
- The Committee's activities, which include the preparation of the Greek National Plan for Combating Desertification, of a report on drought in Greece, the organization of two international conferences on desertification, and many actions aiming at the public awareness on desertification and its impacts;
- The financial aid provided by the Greek State to developing countries for the implementation of the Convention;
- The preparation of a national action plan to limit emissions of greenhouse gases.

An extensive participatory process took place during the preparation of the provisional national action plan. A large number of scientists were invited and participated in the relevant work groups; meetings, consultations and exchange of information were a part of the process. Communication with and representation of NGOs was also established.

Following its completion, the provisional GNAP is being presented in public and distributed to ALL stake-holders in order to function as grounds for an extensive dialogue between all parties involved and affected. The outcome of this dialogue will help GNCCD formulate the final edition of the GNAP and push the plan's implementation and incorporation through its official adoption by the government. Local authorities, NGOs and representatives of stakeholders will be asked to participate in preparing Local Action Plans provided for in the GNAP and aiming at its proper implementation. A communication campaign aiming at information dissemination, public awareness and sensitization will be launched as part of the effort to implement the GNAP.

Significant measures have already been taken to help combat desertification, such as:

- The preparation of a National Cadastral Survey, currently under progress;
- Certain measures and actions taken in the sector of the forest resources management, the dealing with forest fires and the effort for reforestation;
- The effort for a rational management of freshwater resources;
- The significant agri-environmental measures under progress in many areas of the country.
- The national and regional plans under preparation;
- Various actions and measures regarding public awareness, capacity-building and education, such as education offered on environmental protection and sustainable management of natural resources, advisory services offered to farmers in relation to erosion and environmental protection, and the significant role played by the environmental NGOs;
- The participation of Greece in international meetings of Annex IV signatories to the Convention.

Regarding measures taken or planned within the framework of the GNAP, the report extensively cites on the following:

(a) General measures to prevent and mitigate desertification, namely:

- determination of threatened areas
- Information and awareness of groups involved;
- Implementation and monitoring of the measures to be taken;
- Spatial planning;
- Basic institutional and legislative measures;
- Allocation of financial resources required;
- Selection of pilot areas;
- Restoration of desertified areas;
- Research;
- International cooperation.

(b) Specific measures on certain sectors directly connected to the situation of desertification in Greece, namely:

- Agricultural sector (soil erosion control, conservation of surface water and dealing with drought, implementation of measures);
- Forest sector (protection against illegal land use changes, forest fire control, proper forest management, implementation of measures, research);
- Cattle raising sector (legal, technical, political and educational measures);
- Freshwater resources sector (institutional and irrigation measures, measures regarding urban and industrial water use, measures for increasing water availability, research);
- Social and economic sector (financial, technological, development, demographic, social, legislative, institutional measures, measures on infrastructure and relevant research).

The successful implementation of the GNAP depends mainly on the securing of its funding, the exact amount of which will be assessed in a special study. Sources of finance of the GNAP could be the state budget, E.U. funding, contributions of groups to be benefitted by the measures to be taken and special contributions and donations.

ITALY

The UNCCD has been ratified by the Italian Parliament with the Law n.170 in 1997.

In September 1997, the Italian President of the Council has instituted the National Committee to combat drought and desertification. The Committee has been working on the implementation and the dissemination of knowledge aimed at combating desertification in Italy. Its most important activity has been the involvement of the institutions and the research organizations to coordinate the political action to fight drought and soil degradation and the social, economic, energetic, environmental and cultural aspects of the Mediterranean basin.

In order to implement the UNCCD the Italian Committee has signed several Memoranda of Understanding with different partners: the Food and Agricultural Organization, the Ente Teatrale Italiano, ANPA and Asinara National Park, Fondo Euro-Mediterraneo, Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Moreover, the Committee is supporting the activities of two study centres in areas that are particularly vulnerable to drought and desertification: Matera (Basilicata) and Porto Torres (Sardinia). In cooperation with the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, the Ministry of Environment has launched a campaign for the enhancement of the sustainable development of the Matera Sassi, that is already included in the UNESCO World Heritage List, and represents a significant and innovative example of the rehabilitation of an urban ecosystem, as well as of appropriate use of national resources and harmonious management in a territorial context characterized by long periods of drought and serious processes of erosion and desertification.

The interactions between social and political worlds have been discussed in several meetings, promoted by the National Committee, with national and international experts. We can mention the workshop on the parameters and indicators of Porto Torres (18-20 September 1998), the first and the second meeting of Matera on the European policies to combat desertification (28-29 July 1997, 29-31 October 1998), and finally the meetings that has been organized in Rome last February, the International workshop "Social participation to combat desertification. Assessment, adaptation and design of a pilot implementation scheme for the use of European Awareness Scenario Workshop methodology in the framework of Annex IV countries" (Rome, 14 February 2000), and the workshop "Desertification, climate change, bio-diversity and forest: synergies for an inter-regional agenda between Northern and Southern Mediterranean countries" (Rome, 16 February 2000) that has seen the participation of all the countries of the Annex IV, France, European Union, all the countries of the U.M.A. and Egypt.

Some partial but very important answers have started to appear. We appreciate the birth of a new strategy of cooperation. We have seen the promotion of new rules of soil protection, and the Law n.152/99 on waters, recently approved by the Parliament, includes specific activities to combat desertification and drought.

The environmental policies are strictly linked to the energetic, industrial and scientific and technological politics. In Italy the urbanization of new areas and the abandonment of the ancient cities and the territorial settlements contribute to increasing the susceptibility to desertification. This is why we had the need to develop the collaboration between governments, scientific organizations, institutions, local communities and non-governmental organizations to establish common programmes, in particular, in the following fields:

- management of natural resources, soil and water;
- coast protection;
- improvement of compatible agriculture and eco-technique;
- sustainable tourism;
- environmental education and sustainable use of the resources;
- promotion of innovative technologies and unemployment support.

The National Committee has prepared the "First national communication to combat desertification" submitted and approved by the Inter-Ministerial

Committee for the Economic Planning (CIPE) - deliberation n.154/98 -, the National Committee has approved the "Guidelines for the National Programme" and finally the CIPE has approved the "National action programme to combat drought and desertification in Italy" - deliberation n.229/99.

The Government has played its role in the approval of the CIPE deliberation that clearly underlines the different role that the Government and the Regions play in the fight against desertification and drought and foresees the strategic and operative importance of the Regions in the enforcement of the UNCCD with specific programmes at local level.

PORTUGAL

The National Action Programme to Combat Desertification was approved on 17 June 1998, and is the result of a widespread participation by agents involved and interested in the issue of desertification, mainly from the most affected regions, in a total of about 2200 people, in strict compliance with the spirit of the Convention to Combat Desertification.

We are now ready to begin the implementation of the NAP, as key requirements were already satisfied:

- Campaigns to raise public awareness on the issue of the desertification;
- Creation of conditions for a strong participation of public and private entities;
- Integrated interdepartmental and multi-disciplinary cooperation, from the drafting of policies up to the preparation of the implementation of specific actions;
- Creation of a National Committee to Coordinate the NAP and to monitor its implementation;
- Creation of a National Desertification Observatory, working closely with the National Committee, that will make possible the monitoring and the assessment of the programme s implementation.

A National Coordination Group was created in December 1996 to elaborate the NAP, presided by the Focal Point, including experts from eight ministries, several institutions of the civil service, some of the central departments and others from regional services, for a total of about 30 people. This Group was responsible for the preparation of a synthesis document on "Causes and consequences of desertification in Portugal", which was prepared to give to the public a scientific and technical background for discussion.

The public working sessions were held at the regional level with the participation of the media, universities, environmental NGO´s, experts from official departments, teachers from several education levels and individuals concerned with the problem. A Scientific Council was also created to support the National Coordination Group. This Group was composed of 12 experts covering areas such as climate, soil, water, rural development, economy and sociology.

SPAIN

La aplicación de la Convención de las Naciones Unidas de Lucha contra la Desertificación (CLD) en España está integrada en la política ambiental nacional cuyos mayores desafíos a corto plazo se refieren al uso racional y recuperación de la calidad del agua y su entorno, el control de la pérdida de cobertura vegetal (deforestación, incendios forestales) y de suelo productivo (erosión, desertificación) seguidos por la recuperación del medio litoral y la reducción y gestión adecuada de los residuos, así como la conservación y recuperación del gran patrimonio natural.

La política ambiental española está determinada por el compromiso asumido en el marco de la Conferencia de Río (1992) de concretar a nivel nacional el

proceso allí iniciado hacia el "desarrollo sostenible", así como por la integración del medio ambiente en las políticas sectoriales que recoge el V Programa Comunitario en materia de medio ambiente "Hacia el desarrollo sostenible".

Esta política está coordinada por el Ministerio de Medio Ambiente, creado en 1996 agrupando las competencias en esta materia de distintos departamentos ministeriales, y cuyo objetivo es instrumentar una acción coherente y eficaz a nivel estatal concitando un consenso lo más amplio posible, mediante un continuo proceso de información, participación y seguimiento público e institucional a través de los diversos órganos de participación existentes.

El Ministerio de Medio Ambiente está desarrollando una importante labor de planificación a nivel nacional para desarrollar tanto los planes existentes como los nuevos instrumentos de planificación que se están elaborando y ponerlos en marcha, muchos de ellos relacionados con las esferas de actuación señaladas por la Convención de Lucha contra la Desertificación. Estos Planes Nacionales y diferentes Estrategias Sectoriales, conjuntamente considerados, constituyen la Estrategia Nacional de Desarrollo Sostenible.

Como antecedentes de estrategias de lucha contra la desertificación en España anteriores a la CLD, hay que destacar el Proyecto de Lucha contra la Desertificación en el Mediterráneo, Proyecto LUCDEME, puesto en marcha en 1981 tras la Conferencia de las Naciones Unidas sobre la Desertificación de Nairobi (1977), actualmente vigente y desarrollado por la Dirección General de Conservación de la Naturaleza del Ministerio de Medio Ambiente. Es un proyecto destinado a promocionar el conocimiento del proceso de desertificación y las formas de combatirlo. La contribución del Plan Nacional de Investigación y Desarrollo desde su creación en 1981 ha sido fundamental, promoviendo diversas actuaciones orientadas a paliar los efectos de la desertificación y a dar respuesta a las graves consecuencias que la misma produce en los territorios afectados. Asimismo la lucha contra la desertificación ha estado integrada desde la entrada en España en 1986 en la Unión Europea en la estrategia de aplicación de los Fondos Estructurales y de Cohesión de la UE.

La CLD fue firmada por España el 14 de octubre de 1994 y el instrumento de ratificación fue expedido en enero de 1996. La Convención entró en vigor en España el 26 de diciembre de 1996.

El órgano de coordinación nacional (OCN) establecido en principio para la aplicación de la Convención ha estado compuesto por representantes del Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores (a través de la Dirección General de Relaciones Culturales y Científicas), del Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia (a través del Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas) y del Ministerio de Medio Ambiente (a través de la Dirección General de Conservación de la Naturaleza).

En el marco del procedimiento de elaboración del Programa de Acción Nacional el primer paso consistió en la presentación por parte del Ministerio de Medio Ambiente al Consejo Asesor de Medio Ambiente (órgano consultivo en el que están representados todos los sectores de la sociedad) de un documento de principios, que fue favorablemente informado. Seguidamente se formó un grupo de trabajo, coordinado desde la Dirección General de Conservación de la Naturaleza, para la elaboración de un documento de trabajo del Programa de Acción Nacional (Borrador del PAN). De este grupo forman parte representantes de distintos organismos de la Administración con competencia en las esferas relacionadas con la desertificación y expertos investigadores. El Borrador del PAN ha sido ya elaborado y va a ser sometido a un proceso de debate abierto al conjunto de la sociedad española.

Como está previsto en el Borrador del PAN, para alcanzar una mayor eficacia en la lucha contra la desertificación se considera oportuno instituir un Comité nacional con el compromiso de aplicar la Convención, que se encargue

de la elaboración, coordinación y ejecución del Programa de Acción Nacional y de seguir la evolución del proceso de desertificación en España y en la cuenca del Mediterráneo, y en el que estén representados todas la Administraciones públicas y los diversos sectores con interés directo en la lucha contra la desertificación.

La creación del "Comité Nacional de lucha contra la Desertificación" se ha puesto en marcha recientemente estando prevista próximamente su aprobación mediante un Real Decreto previa deliberación del Consejo de Ministros.

Se trata de un órgano colegiado, participativo y de reflexión al que deben incorporarse los sectores implicados. En concreto formarán parte del Comité representantes de los Ministerios de la Administración General del Estado, de las Comunidades Autónomas afectadas por la desertificación, de la Administración Local, de Organismos e Institutos Nacionales de carácter técnico y de investigación, de asociaciones profesionales agrarias y forestales y de asociaciones no gubernamentales ambientales.

Estas actuaciones constituyen los primeros pasos para crear en España un marco institucional para un control coherente y funcional de la desertificación.

El PAN no puede desarrollarse de otra forma que como parte de la planificación nacional ambiental y de desarrollo económico y social puesto que se parte de una situación caracterizada por el hecho de que la mayor parte de los campos de acción integrados en la lucha contra la desertificación han sido, o están siendo en la actualidad, objeto de atención y planificación por parte tanto de las Administraciones Públicas como de los distintos estamentos de la sociedad.

Partiendo del diagnóstico realizado de la situación en España, en el que se han estudiado las distintas políticas, Estrategias y Planes sectoriales con influencia, tanto positiva como negativa, en la desertificación, se concluye que, en la actualidad, existe un gran número de acciones o medidas que se han venido llevando a cabo en nuestro país, algunas de ellas se vienen realizando desde hace largo tiempo, que, de alguna manera, se pueden considerar relacionadas con la lucha contra la desertificación. Son acciones que surgen en contextos muy diversos, con más o menos relación con los objetivos específicos perseguidos en el Programa. El carácter multisectorial de los recursos suelo y agua aparece como explicación a la dispersión de acciones en el marco de diferentes políticas, desde la agraria a la hidráulica, pasando por la forestal o desde un punto de vista global las políticas de desarrollo rural, desarrollo regional, ambiental, etc.

La coherencia existente entre el PAN y otras estrategias queda establecida en el sentido de que buena parte de las esferas que guardan relación con la lucha contra la desertificación están contempladas en dichas estrategias. A lo largo del desarrollo del PAN se profundizará en este diagnóstico previo realizado y se definirá el papel que debe jugar el propio Programa como catalizador de las medidas relacionadas con el control del proceso desertificador, y que están incluidas (o en su caso proponer su inclusión) en las políticas y planificaciones sectoriales de ellas derivadas. De hecho del proceso de debate del PAN surgirán las propuestas concretas para buscar y promover las sinergias y enfoques complementarios, así como el reconocimiento e integración de los principios de la CLD en los planes ambientales y de desarrollo existentes.

La estrecha relación entre el PAN y el Programa de Acción Regional (PAR) del Anexo IV que está en fase de preparación, queda de manifiesto en la vinculación entre los temas transnacionales identificados como más relevantes para combatir la desertificación en el Mediterráneo norte y las necesidades manifestadas en el PAN en su estado actual, siendo evidente que el trabajo que

en el marco del PAN se está desarrollando en este sentido contribuirá de forma decisiva al desarrollo de las medidas previstas en el PAN.

Como paso previo al debate y aprobación del PAN se ha elaborado un documento de "Directrices del Programa de Acción Nacional contra la Desertificación" que será aprobado próximamente. Cuando se dé por terminado el proceso de debate del PAN entre todos los actores implicados, el PAN será aprobado por el Gobierno.

Del análisis realizado de la legislación sobre medio ambiente y recursos naturales la conclusión más relevante es que, en la actualidad, se está trabajando en la elaboración o modificación de determinadas normativas existentes relacionadas con los sectores más estrechamente vinculados con la lucha contra la desertificación y que, en general, ofrecen aspectos muy positivos en el sentido de la integración en las distintas normativas de los principios de la CLD. En concreto nos referimos al sector agrícola, al sector forestal, al sector ligado a los recursos hídricos y, con un carácter más horizontal puesto que está muy relacionado con los sectores anteriores, a la política de desarrollo rural. Del proceso de debate del PAN se espera la identificación de medidas concretas para la modificación de normativas existentes o elaboración de otras nuevas, bien en el marco de los procesos de cambio en marcha, bien en otros nuevos.

En el proceso de participación en aras de la preparación del PAN se han distinto grados de participación en función de las etapas del procedimiento de elaboración del mismo. Es en la parte referente a la representación de intereses sociales en los distintos grupos y órganos existentes, constituidos y previstos que han participado en el PAND órganos ya existentes como el Consejo Asesor de Medio Ambiente, órgano de trabajo para la elaboración del Borrador del PAN, Comité Nacional de Lucha contra la Desertificación.

En paso siguiente, de acuerdo con los principios de la CLD, así como con la metodología participativa impulsada por el Ministerio de Medio Ambiente en el proceso de elaboración de sus documentos estratégicos, y una vez aprobado el Borrador del PAN y las Directrices del PAN por el propio Ministerio de Medio Ambiente y por el Comité Nacional, es a este someter el Borrador del PAN a un amplio proceso de consulta y debate en el que participen los distintos estamentos implicados, tanto de la Administración General del Estado, Administraciones Autonómicas y Administración Local, como representantes de los sectores implicados de la sociedad civil.

El proceso de consulta y debate previsto se ha estructurado en base a la organización de una serie de mesas y grupos de trabajo sectoriales. De las mesas y grupos de trabajo formarán parte, además de representantes de la administración, representantes del colectivo objeto a investigación, y representantes de diversos colectivos de la sociedad: Asociaciones profesionales agrarias, Asociaciones profesionales forestales, Asociaciones empresariales de carácter general, Asociaciones de defensa de la naturaleza, Sindicatos, Asociaciones de Usuarios y Consumidores, Consejo de la Juventud, Colegios profesionales, Sociedades Científicas, Fundaciones con actividades relacionadas con la desertificación, etc.

Una vez consultados todos ellos, se elaborará el documento definitivo del Programa, para su aprobación por el Gobierno. El seguimiento de la aplicación del Programa de Acción Nacional se encomendará al Comité Nacional de Lucha contra la Desertificación.

Por otro lado, se tiene prevista la difusión, durante el proceso de debate del PAN, del Borrador del mismo en Internet, dentro de la página Web de la desertificación, actualmente en elaboración, incluyendo la posibilidad de remitir sugerencias y propuestas a una dirección de correo electrónico.

Entre las líneas de acción que propone el PAN, se incluye una estrategia de participación y sensibilización pública que contribuirá al éxito en la ejecución del PAN basada en dos líneas principales: la caracterización y promoción del sector español vinculado a la desertificación con el fin de proveer un marco para el desarrollo y proyección de las tecnologías existentes y su aplicación, y la divulgación y sensibilización a la opinión pública de la importancia y magnitud de este problema favoreciendo la difusión de información veraz y rigurosa sobre el proceso. Con ello se obtendrán las actitudes y estados de opinión necesarios para favorecer el control de la desertificación.

El Programa de Acción Nacional, como ya se ha dicho actualmente en estado de Borrador, presenta en la parte dedicada a las propuestas de acción las principales medidas de una política nacional de lucha contra la desertificación, que son: la determinación de las áreas de actuación, la coordinación de políticas y la identificación de una serie de líneas de acción específicas de lucha contra la desertificación.

La determinación de áreas de actuación tiene como objetivo, a través de la aplicación territorial de indicadores de cada uno de los elementos que la CLD señala en el Anexo IV como característicos de la desertificación en el Mediterráneo, la determinación de los espacios físicos y socioeconómicos sobre los que se va a desarrollar la política de lucha contra la desertificación.

La coordinación de políticas se presenta como una pieza clave del Programa de Acción Nacional. Por tratarse la desertificación de un fenómeno de carácter multisectorial y multidisciplinar, que demanda soluciones integradas, dicha coordinación es un requisito esencial para obtener el éxito en la formulación de dichas soluciones, vinculadas a la armonización de intereses, es decir, a la resolución de los conflictos que se plantean en el territorio. Como base de partida en el Borrador del PAN se ha incluido una Identificación Preliminar de acciones a desarrollar en una estrategia integrada de lucha contra la desertificación, estructuradas en los grandes campos de actuación u objetivos generales a conseguir, acordes con las esferas de acción prioritarias indicadas en el artículo 6 del Anexo IV de la CLD. Este conjunto de acciones se pretende que sirva de base para iniciar un debate en el que esta relación de acciones se analice, se detecten ausencias, se estudien sus posibilidades de aplicación, etc.

En lo referente a la asignación de los presupuestos nacionales en apoyo a la aplicación de la Convención, en el Borrador del PAN se establece que el principio básico económico de todos los sectores llamados a implementar el PAN es el de la necesidad de reorientar los presupuestos públicos o privados, hacia la consecución de los objetivos del PAN.

Por último, entre las medidas incluidas en el PAN está prevista la creación de un grupo de trabajo cuyo objetivo es la definición y aplicación de indicadores físicos, biológicos y socioeconómicos de la desertificación, válidos para satisfacer las necesidades planteadas, entre ellas, y de forma destacada, la de evaluar los efectos de la aplicación de las medidas comprendidas en el PAN. El grupo de indicadores debe integrarse en el marco del Sistema Nacional de Indicadores Ambientales, línea de trabajo que se está desarrollando en España en evolución continua, adaptándose al modelo DPSIR (Fuerzas Conductoras-Presión-Estado-Impacto-Respuesta) que han adoptado últimamente diversos organismos como la OCDE, la Comisión de Desarrollo Sostenible de las Naciones Unidas y la Agencia Europea de Medio Ambiente.

TURKEY

The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification was adopted in Paris on 17 June 1994 and opened for signature there on 14-15 October 1994. The Convention was signed in 1994 in Paris by our Minister, was approved in November 1996 by the Environment Commission of the Turkish Parliament and was

included in the agenda of the General Assembly for ratifying. This Convention was assented with law number: 4340 on 11 February 1998 in the Turkish Parliament. It was published on official journal which number is 23078 on 14 February 1998.

The objectives of this Convention is to combat desertification and mitigate effects of drought in countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa, through effective actions at all levels, supported by international cooperation and partnership arrangements, in the framework of and integrated approach which is consistent with Agenda 21, with a view to contribution to the achievement of sustainable development in affected areas.

As you already know, Turkey has an important location. It is like a bridge between East and West, both culturally and geographically. Turkey gives importance to the implementation of this Convention both on a national and on a regional basis.

Turkey, being a member state of the Regional Implementation Annex for the North Mediterranean Countries (RIANMC- Spain, Greece, Portugal, Italy), has been participating in Regional Action Programme (RAP) studies.

Turkey is at the crossroads linking Asia, Europe and Africa, with 97 per cent of its total area (777,971 km²) situated in Asia. The Dardanelles and Bosporus straits extend from Europe to Asia and create a natural connection between the basins of the Mediterranean and Black Seas. The country is surrounded by four seas and has a coastline of 8,333 km. The Aegean and Mediterranean shorelines together exceed 4,500 km, while the Black Sea coast stretches 1,700 km, and is shared with Bulgaria, Romania, Georgia, Ukraine and Russia. The Sea of Marmara constitutes the remainder of Turkey's coastal area.

The geological structure, topography, climate, wildlife, and plant cover are diverse and the country can be divided into four coastal units (the Black, Marmara, Aegean, and Mediterranean Seas) and three mountainous areas. Nearly 65 per cent of the land has slopes steeper than 15 per cent in average, even in the coastal areas. Average altitude is 1,132 m and only 10 per cent of the country is less than 200 m above sea level. High mountains are concentrated in central and eastern Anatolia. Earthquakes, some quite powerful, occur mostly along the north Anatolian fault that runs from the Dardanelles Strait through the Eastern Black Sea Mountains, paralleling the Black Sea coast.

Climate affects erosion by rainfall, temperature and wind. The most important of them is rainfall. The structure, quantity and magnitude of rainfall affects erosion in different ways. If there is severe rain for long periods of time, the erosion rate will increase accordingly. The highly varied climate can be harsh (dry or cold), as in central, east and southeast Anatolia. Average annual temperatures can vary from 4-10°C in the central region to 18-20°C on the southern coast. The climate is both temperate, with rain year-round, and subtropical, where summers are dry. Average annual precipitation is 770 mm., and may rise to 2,300 mm in Rize and drop to 324 mm in Kirsehir.

Overall, the country is well-endowed with natural resources, such as lignite, coal, iron, copper, chrome, magnesite, boron, and salt, and more modest amounts of oil and natural gas. Although somewhat unevenly distributed, water is plentiful and offers a ready supply for drinking, irrigation, industrial development, and hydropower generation. Forests cover about 26 per cent of the landmass, but over half the area is degraded and unproductive. Finally, because the country is surrounded by water, fish supplies are diverse, but only 10 per cent have economic value and catches are modest. The mountainous terrain restricts agricultural development; only 26 per cent of the surface area is suitable, and nearly three-quarters of it is prone to erosion. A fourth of the land is suitable for agriculture.

Integration of environmental issues in development is sustained through Five-Year Development Plans and Annual Programs, which are prepared by State Planning Organization. The Five-Year Development Plans, the amendment of all kinds of legislation, that distort the compatibility between economic development and envircnmental protection, and that detain and reduce the impacts of measures are claimed.

In this context, for an effective environmental management, National Environmental Action Plan (NEAP) has been prepared. In addition to Development Plan, the NEAP provides a national environmental strategy while indicating Turkey's environmental outlook at upcoming regional and international arena. Broadly speaking, NEAP has four separate goals, improving the quality of life for all involved, enabling total awareness on environmental issues, formation of a management system which involves design, implementation, financing, monitoring, supervision and information technology and finally economical, social and cultural development for all living and their environments.

As endorsed by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development Agenda 21, constitutes an unprecedented commitment by international community to an integrated framework of shared values, objectives, priorities and actions. It also signifies "the beginning of a new global partnership for sustainable development". As a response to obligations of the Agenda 21, a National Agenda 21 is to be prepared which is now being drafted. National Agenda 21 points out important problematic areas in Turkey and gives the full responsibility for their resolution to the central government. Also, further progress is to be achieved by way of preparing and implementing Local Agenda 21's.

The Local Agenda 21 process entails the building of, and reaches a consensus on, a "sustainable community" vision, encompassing long-term, mid-term and short-term goals, and the subsequent preparation of local action plans. Local Agenda 21 formations are carried out by IULA-EMME and are supported by UNDP. Though these studies are at the national level, there will be obligations at the global level.

As requested by the UNCCD, National Action Programme preparations are under way. The NAP will be over viewing the past practices, a sanction in enforcing the realization of the principles of UNCCD and will work towards the integration of new principles into the policy, with special regard to desertification and drought to enable coordination and harmonization. As NAP is not completed, it still does not have a legal status.

II. OTHER AFFECTED COUNTRY PARTIES

ARMENIA

The natural and climatic conditions in the Armenian plateau have been formed 10-12,000 years ago. The Armenians who populated existing territory since 9-6 centuries BC have been involved in agriculture and cattle-breeding. A distinctly continental climate, aridity of the area, fragmentation of the relief have been forcing the population to fight for the conservation of land resources, to build irrigation and drying systems, to terrace steep slopes in order to prevent land removal, erosion processes and, finally, desertification.

In Armenia, which covers an area of 2974.3 thousand ha, the following natural soil zones are represented: semi-desert (236 thousand ha), dry steppe (242 thousand ha), steppe (797 thousand ha), forest (712 thousand ha) and highland meadow (629 thousand ha), and the rest of the lands of 358.3 ha are represented by mother ores and water surface. The agricultural holdings amount to 46.8 per cent, forests - 11.2 per cent, the rest - 42 per cent.

The major part of the republic's territory is, to a different extent, undergoing desertification processes. However, almost 50 per cent of the lands in the republic are eroded, some 60 per cent of the territory undergo landslide, mudflow and other exogenous processes and some 40 per cent of lands are represented by stony soils, while saline soils amount to 30 thousand ha of lands amount to 30.0 thousand ha.

Land privatization has been started in the republic since 1991 at the decision of the Supreme Council of Armenia. It has been substantially accomplished in 1994. Starting from 1993 the Ministry of Nature Protection of Armenia participated in the United Nations Inter-state Committee on Development of the Convention to Combat Desertification. The Convention has been signed on behalf of Armenia on 14 October 1994 in Paris and ratified by the National Assembly (Parliament) of Armenia on 2 July 1997. Since 9 September 1997 Armenia is a Party to the Convention.

Pursuant to the Agenda 21, where one of major obligation is the creation of legislative and legal principles for sustainable development, and during the period since independence of Armenia (1991) and change of management system of the whole economic mechanism due to transition to a market economy, a radical review of the whole complex of legislative and legal mechanisms was required.

According to the current RoA Constitution adopted in 1995 the state ensures environmental protection, reproduction and wise use of natural resources.

All the state and sector programmes in Armenia are developed with regard to environmental concerns and rational use of natural resources. All these works are substantially related to the desertification problems and land conservation as the major natural resource. The actions taken are designed with regard to compliance with the republic's obligations on implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification.

Concrete plans and strategies for desertification problems failed to be developed in the republic except for the Cabinet Decision of 7.10.1998 "On Approval of List of Measures for Meeting the Obligations of the Republic of Armenia Proceeding from the UN Convention to Combat Desertification". However, actions on creation of irrigation and drainage systems, forest-protection belts, rehabilitation of saline soils and degraded lands (reclamation) carried out in the country before 1990s lacked a comprehensive approach to resolution of desertification-related issues.

A National Action Programme (NAP) to Combat Desertification in Armenia is presently being formulated. After the ratification of the Convention the RoA Cabinet by its Decision No. 124 has assigned that:

- the responsibility for meeting obligations undertaken by the Republic of Armenia under the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification has been entrusted to the Ministry of Nature Protection;

- the Ministry of Nature Protection jointly with the stakeholder ministries and agencies would submit to the RoA Cabinet recommendations on actions for implementation of obligations undertaken by the Republic.

On 7 October 1998 the RoA Cabinet has adopted Decision No. 620 "On Approval of the List of Measures for Meeting the Obligations of the Republic of Armenia Proceeding from the UN Convention to Combat Desertification". According to this decision a Coordination Commission - National Focal Point (NFP) to Combat Desertification has been instituted by Order No. 193 signed by the Minister of Nature Protection on 12 December 1998. 28 persons, including 11 female, are included in the Commission. The Statute of the Commission has

been agreed with all the members of Coordination Commission and approved by Order No. 31 of 25.03.1999 signed by the Minister of Nature Protection.

In accordance with its status the Commission is a consultative and advisory body, which arranges and coordinates development and implementation of programmes proceeding from the RoA obligations under the Convention. The Commission has no independent budget and financial capacity. The following social and economic sectors related to the issues of combating desertification and its consequences are represented in the Commission: nature conservation, agriculture, urban development, social security, economics and finances, justice, education and science, hydrometeorology, geology. Besides, representatives from such structures as the Ministry for Territorial Planning, State Emergency Administration, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, etc. are involved in the Commission.

The Commission has a developed and approved action plan for 1999-2000. The activities are carried out in the following areas:

- improvement of legislative and normative documentation;
- elaboration of strategic issues for combating desertification;
- elaboration of international and scientific technical cooperation issues;
- administrative arrangements for National Action Programme;
- improvement of the role of non-governmental organizations and involvement of broader public in the preparation and implementation of combating desertification, particularly women, youth and students.

No specialized information network is currently available for the Commission. Preparation of NAP would lead to solving the issue of set-up, running and use of database. Existing sector databases related to desertification problems are fragmented, not duly systematized and practically difficult to be used. Data for the preparation of NAP are presently collected and concentrated at the Lands Conservation Division at the Ministry of Nature Protection.

While preparing the NAP to combat desertification in Armenia all the environmental conventions and projects implemented in the country are being taken into account. This would allow to exclude overlapping and uncoordinated actions. Under structural changes of land relations and introduction of new forms of land ownership preparation of the NAP acquires a particular urgency in terms of natural resources conservation and use.

The principles of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification are recognized and integrated in the projects for Food Procurement in Armenia, Water Sector Development in Armenia, Forestry Sector Development in Armenia, etc. where "Environmental Protection" is represented in a special chapter stipulating also environmental limitations. For neighbouring Georgia, Azerbaijan, Iran and Turkey actions to combat desertification envisaged within the framework of NAP preparation would be of great significance in regional aspect.

A preliminary analysis of environmental legislation within the NAP framework identified a necessity for changes and addenda to the exiting legislative, standard and legal instruments, which envisage land holding/land use system reformation, natural resources management, raising of responsibility and concern of local population in regard of land conservation.

Improvement of legislation in the field of land conservation is directed to toughening of existing enforcement measures and to stimulation of implementation of obligatory measures for conservation of land resources by population using economic mechanisms. The NAP framework stipulates legislative instruments to be elaborated or modified.

Pursuant to the RoA Cabinet's decision Cabinet Decision (No. 124 of 02.03.1998) by which the Ministry of Nature Protection was appointed as responsible for implementation of the Convention and further to the Programme for meeting the RoA obligations under the UNCCD (Cabinet Decision No. 620 of 17.10.1998), the Ministry has been carrying out negotiations with different institutions and international organizations for implementation of the Convention in the RoA. In particular, NAP preparation in the RoA has been negotiated with UNCCD, UNEP, UNSO/UNDP and the UNDP Office in Armenia.

Pursuant to the Memorandum on Understanding between the RoA Cabinet (in the person of the Ministry of Nature Protection) and UNEP, UNEP is rendering consultative and financial support for the NAP preparation. Part of the administrative matters are being arranged by the UNDP Office in Armenia.

Environmental protection is integrated in the Armenia's policies and plans, since all the national and sector programmes are prepared with regard to the measures for conservation and rational use of natural resources.

In institutional aspect it is envisaged to distribute the rights and obligations among the national, regional and local authorities, as well as land resources related organizations both at the national and ministerial levels.

Given the necessity of creation educational, training and scientific basis for combating desertification, proposals have already been prepared and submitted to consideration on introduction of special courses on environmental protection, including land conservation into general, education, specialized and scientific and training programmes.

All the above-mentioned activities are in direct relationship with precise monitoring data characterizing different processes. A special part of the NAP related to informatics and monitoring would envisage strict administrative, legal, technical and functional frames for the activity of different management structures. Initiated land mapping and assessment would serve as foundation for long-term monitoring and would enable to purposefully regulate human activity for conservation of land resources.

The Ministry of Nature Protection and the Ministry of Justice according to the RoA Cabinet Decision No. 620 of 07.10.1998 should prepare and submit a concept for National Special Fund for implementation of actions to combat desertification. The major objective of the Fund is to ensure involvement of local structures into implementation of programmes to combat desertification. The Fund's Statute would stipulate the terms for participation of different partners in management and funding of combating desertification.

There is a hope that difficulties related to the initial phase of works and insufficiency of technical equipment would be resolved with the assistance of international and national organizations.

AZERBAIJAN

Azerbaijan is rich in mineral resources and raw materials. There are oil, gas, non-ferrous and precious metals, construction materials and other mineral resources. Besides, the agricultural sector is well represented in the country. Industrial sector is also sufficiently developed. From the pre-independence period, Azerbaijan inherited from the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics a lot of negative economic, environmental and social problems. They are trying to solve these problems in the country. It was evident for the Government of the Azerbaijan Republic that there should be urgent measures undertaken to address the situation of this kind.

In 1998, with the assistance of the World Bank, the first stage of the National Environmental Protection Plan was completed and approved by the

Government of the Azerbaijan Republic. This document contains priority projects and plans aimed at the improvement of the environmental situation in Azerbaijan. In this situation the accession of the Azerbaijan Republic to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification became a milestone for solving the aforementioned tasks. In this context, preparation of the National Environmental Protection Plan would serve as an important impetus to address a number of environmental, economic and social problems.

At present, the plans to privatize industrial enterprises, agricultural sector and land use in general are gaining momentum. In this relation, environmental problems emerge in addition to economic and social ones. For example, there are problems in rational land use, meaning land utilization without a detriment to the soil fertility. In this regard, it was just in time for Azerbaijan to accede to the UNCCD and to start the preparation of the National Action Plan (NAP) to Combat Desertification.

In view of the above, one of the priority problems is to develop NAP to Combat Desertification and to coordinate it with other relevant governmental plans and programmes in order to achieve synergy and maximum payback and effectiveness. A very cumbersome environmental management system was inherited. Irrespective of the fact that the State Committee for Nature Protection in Azerbaijan was established in 1967, other parallel structures responsible for different resources were also functioning.

For recent four years, a lot of very important legislation acts have been adopted in this country. They are the Land, Water and Forest Codes. Apart from it, the Law on Land Reform was adopted - this law has political, economic and social significance. The privatization of land on the basis of this law has been almost completed. Besides, it should be noted that the analysis of existing environmental legislation acts has shown that some of them are out of date and are not working because they do not correspond to the existing state of affairs. For this reason in 1999 a number of environmental laws were adopted, such as Law on Environmental Safety, Law on Conservation of Soil Fertility, which are very important in the context of the provisions of the Convention to Combat Desertification.

In March 1998, a National Workshop to Raise Public Awareness on problems related to combating desertification was held. Representatives from all stakeholder organizations, institutions and enterprises participated in this Workshop. As a result of the Workshop, an address to the Azerbaijan Republic Government was adopted. The result was very efficient - on 24 April 1998, the President of the Azerbaijan Republic signed the Law on Ratification of United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (N487-1G).

At present, the State Committee for Ecology and Nature Utilization Control headed by a Deputy Prime-Minister is a coordinator and responsible for the implementation of all environmental conventions. After the Convention had been ratified, its coordinator as well as an expert commission consisting of representatives of all stakeholder ministries and institutions, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were appointed. Besides, one should note that NGOs have also selected one coordinator who is guiding these organizations' efforts and is working in close contact with National Coordination Body (NCB).

As a result of the National Workshop, increased interest in the problems of desertification was noted. Interest has been displayed by different layers of population - ranging from government representatives to scientists, students and different NGOs. It was a result of the extensive coverage of this Workshop by different mass media. Such public feedback and the participants' address to the Government have had a positive result. All the important decisions adopted by the Conferences of the Parties to the UNCCD, its results and the text of the Convention, other important documents were translated and brought to the attention of the general public.

At present, when preparation of the NAP has just been started in Azerbaijan, but a wide range of stockholders has been already identified. They are government institutions, representatives of academia, different environmental and women's non-governmental organizations. It should be noted, that representatives of different layers of population, including the increased numbers of women and students, are being involved in the process of the UNCCD implementation.

As it was noted above, Azerbaijan's land resources are subject to different kinds of negative phenomena (erosion, salinization, chemical contamination), which are conditioned by both geo-morphological soil features and human activities and lead to land degradation and further desertification. Considering the fact that a great part of economic potential falls on agricultural and industrial sectors, the Government has always paid a great attention to the state of soil, and has been developing partnership agreements with different international agencies and developed countries in. The results of these contacts in the context of support and participation in the NAP remain very low. This state of affairs is influenced by both objective and subjective reasons.

One should note the assistance of the UNDP office in Azerbaijan, which has rendered technical and financial assistance in installing a GIS system.

In the framework of the Caspian Environmental Program (CEP), maps featuring the spread of desertification in the coastal 25-kilometre zone were prepared. This programme is being financed by the World Bank, Tacis program, UNEP and Global Environmental Fund. This year, the Government of Switzerland provided Azerbaijan with financial assistance to start preparation of the NAP. A consultation process on these issues has been started with all stakeholder ministries and institutions as well as with the NGO community.

It should be noted that NCO has cooperated with many international agencies before. This work was especially active during the development of the National Environmental Action Plan, among whose priorities there were some issues directly related to desertification processes. The Government assists in the implementation of the aforementioned problems. In this regard activities of the Agency to Facilitate the Development of Farms (with the support by the World Bank and FAO)should be noted. All the pilot farms that have been established or are being established make use of modern technologies with due consideration of local traditional expertise and mandatory EIA (in order to prevent irrational land utilization).

One cannot say that at the current stage the role of NGOs is significant in this process, because NGOs unify mainly urban population, scientists, intelligentsia, etc. However their role in the process of understanding of practical challenges in combating desertification is increasing. The expertise of rural population is invaluable here - this expertise will definitely be used in further work on the NAP.

The Territory of Azerbaijan - which is one of the most ancient places of emergence and development of humanity and agriculture - has been impacted by human activity. As a result, the desertification process accompanied by erosion and land degradation has been common for ages and intensified in the 20th century. At present, the area of eroded lands is 3.7 million hectares, including 3 million hectares subject to water erosion, about 0.3 million hectares subject to irrigation erosion, about 0.4 million hectares - to wind erosion. Preliminary and very rough estimates show that the area of heavily eroded and practically degraded land of the agricultural fund comes up to 0.7 million hectares and their normative value is not lower than US$1 billion. More than 1.2 million hectares of land are saline, about 30 thousand of hectares of land have been damaged as a result of mining and other technogeneous processes.

For recent five or six years an attitude to environmental problems and related economic and social problems has become more serious. International cooperation has a special role to play. The most effective way of developing international cooperation has been accession to international conventions. For this reason, it is necessary to coordinate the already developed action programs and specific plans with the NAP to combat desertification in order to achieve synergy.

The following priorities in the framework of development and implementation of the NAP are to be identified:

- To establish a National Database on combating desertification;
- To establish an information system, including a geographical information system on combating desertification;
- To prepare an inventory of all territories subject to desertification processes, to assess those processes and to perform qualitative and quantitative analysis of the existing situation;
- To establish and perform monitoring;
- To organize and implement stationary control methods over the processes of desertification;
- To organize and implement remote methods of control and research of processes leading to desertification;
- To organize and implement control over rational utilization on the basis of EIA under the condition of transition to private land ownership and establishment of many small farms;
- To develop state and regional plans, programs to undertake anti-erosion, melioration, irrigation, forest rehabilitation measures;
- To develop systems of social and economic mechanisms and measures to encourage rational nature utilization;
- To develop national programs to rehabilitate occupied territories, as well territories subject to negative environmental pressure as a result of temporary location of refugees and displaced persons;
- To improve and develop necessary legislation and normative acts;
- Public awareness raising on matters of desertification;
- To involve NGOs in activities to combat desertification;
- To cooperate closer with international organizations and to use the experience of developed countries in process of combating desertification;
- To train qualified specialists who will continue the process of combating desertification in the future under the conditions of more negative pressure on the environment.

In the former Soviet Union the Government annually approved the plans of economic and social development, which contained environmental measures. Many of them were directed to combating desertification. They included construction of anti-erosion facilities, planting protective forests, terracing of steep slopes, afforestation of ravines and other unused lands, forest rehabilitation, etc. These activities were funded from the budget. There were no attempts of fund-raising or resource mobilization at the international level. The Swiss Government has allocated funds through the UNCCD secretariat to start activities on the NAP.

It should be noted that there is a Reserve Environmental Fund administered by the Ministry of Finances and the State Committee for Ecology (NCO). This Fund serves to undertake specific environmental activities. The Fund is financed through compensations, fines and payments for environmental pollution. Yet, this Fund has very limited resources. At present the Government directs all funds to the improvement of the situation of refugees and internally displaced (about 1 million people), who live in places with poor conditions. It adds to economic, social and environmental problems.

Under these circumstances, the assistance of donors both international organizations and developed counties would be invaluable. In relation to this,

the development of the NAP a within short time period, and the correct selection of priorities would allow to receive assistance from the aforementioned sources. Such an experience is known to the country. It has reinforced the activity to combat desertification.

At present, there are many requirements in technical cooperation with donors in the areas of awareness raising on modern technologies to combat desertification, training of specialists of needed qualifications, obtaining modern equipment to establish a database and Geographic Information System, obtaining necessary information in Russian language.

For many years, academic institutions and government bodies have been conducting research of the desertification processes and factors causing them. Such institutions as the Institute of Geography, the Institute of Soil Research of the Academy of Sciences, Agro-Environmental Center of the Ministry of Agriculture, as well as the State Committee for Ecology and the State Hydrometeorology Committee have been doing environmental monitoring. At present, a normative act on the establishment and conduct of environmental monitoring has been prepared. Considering the fact that different agencies have been dealing with these issues, it is natural that the information available and approaches are different - i.e. there is no common standard. Different institutions depending on the tasks and goals, have used different methodologies, which need to be unified and brought to a common standard. The situation is the same with information in those agencies.

Under these conditions the aforementioned normative act enables one to unify the system of monitoring in general, and in particular relating to combating desertification.

Azerbaijan has just began developing the NAP, there have already been meetings and consultations concerning these matters with stakeholder ministries and organizations, as well as NGOs, for this reason there are no difficulties in information exchange. It has been planned to publish relevant information materials this year.

The UNCCD implementation process has just started in Azerbaijan, but combat against erosion, soil salinization, chemical contamination has never stopped, and though it has been conducted on a small scale, the extent of practical recultivation of land has increased. It is all happening against the background of global economic and social changes, taking place in the Azerbaijan Republic.

However, it is understood that it is not sufficient for practical solution of desertification problems, which in its turn are related to objective and subjective reasons (war, occupation of 20 per cent of the territory and the disturbance of its environmental balance), the existence of 1 million refugees and displaced persons. Irrespective of all that, it is hoped that thanks to the UNCCD secretariat assistance and guidance the countries' efforts will be put on the right track.

GEORGIA

Georgia, small mountainous country[3] at the eastern coast of the Black Sea, signed the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) in 1994. In 1999, the Parliament of Georgia ratified the Convention, and on 21 October 1999, Georgia became a Party to the UNCCD.

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[3] Population - 5.5 millions, area - 69700 km^2, GDP - 609 USD per capita (1999).

From an economic point of view, currently Georgia represents a typical country with an economy in transition and a set of associated problems. Difficulties are exaggerated with the political disturbances; these plagued the country in early 1990s, shortly after it had restored independence, and catastrophic results have not passed away so far.

The country is still in a stage of rapid development of its legislation. Despite the fact that after adoption of the new Constitution in 1995 and more than 300 new laws of which approximately 50 are directly related to the environmental and relevant fields/environmental protection, natural resources management, land use and agricultural practices - today Georgia's environmental legislation is a confusing mixture of laws and especially regulations/sub-laws and technical standards based on heterogeneous legislative and judicial provisions adopted on the one hand from the legislation of the western countries - especially that of the European Union, and on the other hand from former Soviet legislation. This is one of the main obstacles on the way to integrated sustainable strategy and policy development, implementation and enforcement in Georgia.

Presently, the economy of the country is in such a state, that it is not realistic to expect comprehensive problem solving environmental national investment programs. At the same time, the environmental problems are so huge, that foreign support, as well as domestic investment possibilities, can only stimulate and facilitate a process of economic and institutional reforms. In connection with this it is very important to identify priority directions of the environmental (including desertification issues) institutional and legal system at the early stage of the development. These priorities will be directly related to the sectors of national economy and environment.

At present, the state is poor and the environment is not as valued as it should be. It is difficult to get funds from the state budget for environmental and sustainable natural resources management purposes. There are no central environmental or nature conservation funds, neither on the national nor on the regional and municipal levels. Complete perception of the specific situation in Georgia is necessary in order to work out and implement realistic policies that warrant sustainable development strategy of the country.

The main policy document in Georgia determining the country development strategy in the short term (one year) is "the Indicative Plan for Social and Economic Development", produced annually by the Ministry of Economy. The Indicative Plan for 2000 includes implementation of projects on "Protecting the Soil from Erosion" and "Improving the Soil Fertility" as parts of agricultural sector development programme. However, this document is rather not of the binding character.

The main environmental policy document in Georgia (that should address also problems of desertification) is the National Environmental Action Programme (NEAP), with the 5-year span. The first NEAP, prepared under the auspices of the MENRP, is expected to be approved by the President of Georgia in May 2000. It identifies priority environmental problems in the country and proposes short- and medium-term institutional and regulatory changes and investment actions to address the problems. Numerous ministries, departments, scientific institutions, non-governmental organizations, local and foreign environmental experts contributed to the process of the NEAP development.

Desertification problems are addressed in the section of NEAP devoted to Agricultural Land Use. According to the NEAP "the main environmental problem associated with Georgian agriculture is soil erosion. Soil erosion is caused mainly by poor agricultural practice, such as development of steep slopes; deforestation of mountains; overgrazing; irrigation leading to washing away of topsoil. In recent years practically no means for fighting soil erosion have been deployed since no funds have been available.

Desertification in the eastern part of Georgia has intensified due to overgrazing and climatic changes (reduction of rainfall) in the region. About 3000 ha has been eroded including Shiraki, Eldari, Iori, Taribana, Natbeuri, Naomari, Ole and Jeiran-chel valleys, the ridges, plateau and the major part of the south slope of Kakheti ridge.

Vast areas are salinated. In particular, 59200 ha are strongly salinated, while for 54340 ha salinization is moderate. About 15000 ha of humus-sulfate soils need reclamation."

To alleviate the problems related to soil erosion and desertification the NEAP proposes to enable investment projects and institutional changes. However, these proposals are rather of a general nature.

Over the last three years Georgia has developed environmental sector specific strategies such as "Initial National Communication under UNFCCC" (includes also draft adaptation strategies for expected changes in climate. Adopted in 1999), "Biodiversity Strategy" (development started in 1997), "Forestry Strategy" (development started at 1998). Yet, No sector-specific strategy or action plan for combating desertification has been developed so far in Georgia. With the support of the UNCCD secretariat, the country is initiating its first NAP now.

The Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection (MENRP) bears the function of the UNCCD National Coordination Body (NCB) in Georgia (not through formal nomination but due to the general allocation of responsibilities on governmental statutory bodies). Presently, the National Focal Point (NFP) to the UNCCD is the staff member of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection, working as the Head of the Division of Environmental Policy. Nevertheless, there is an option to shift formal allocation of NCB functions to the State Coordinating Commission to Combat Desertification in Georgia (SCCCDG) - an intersectoral body that is planned to establish; the final decision on the issue will be taken after the initial consultations in framework of the NAP preparation process.

Due to the overall problems in the country's economy and governmental budget the MENRP funding is quite limited. Material resources and means for communication are not adequate too.

In cooperation with governmental as well as scientific establishments and NGOs, with the support of the UNCCD secretariat, NCB and NFP in 1997-1999 undertook several activities on UNCCD and its importance for Georgia. In 1999, the NFP through the assistance provided by the UNDP/UNSO initiated the network of institutions to combat desertification in Georgia. The network consists of 27 different governmental and non-governmental organizations and academic institutions and is designed to support information and experience exchange between the institutions and to facilitate the decision-making process on policy issues to combat desertification.

Prior to its accession to the UNCCD in 1999, Georgia had developed neither the separate NAP on desertification nor the clear framework for incorporation of desertification-related issues into other general or sector plans. First NAP that Georgia has to develop in 2000 will become the result of improved internal cooperation as well as financial assistance of the UNCCD Secretariat, which allotted funds to assist Georgia in NAP development. On 20 April 2000, first awareness-raising meeting on the upcoming preparation of NAP was held at the MENRP by the initiative of the national Focal Point. About 20 state agencies and scientific institutions attended the meeting. Two days later, the separate meeting was held at the MENRP for NGOs on the same topic.

The NAP will be developed through active involvement of all the stakeholders dealing with the problems of desertification including governmental

departments, academic institutions, NGOs, local governmental bodies of the regions threatened or affected by desertification. On the final stage, governmental approval or parliamentary adoption of NAP will be necessary.

In Georgia draft laws and regulations in the field of environmental protection are routinely published and publicly debated. The new Administrative Code of Georgia (1999) boosted the right of public to have an access to any information (except the information containing state or commercial secret) that is possessed by any governmental institution. The ratification of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters by Georgian Parliament (11.02.2000) made a step further in this direction.

NGOs have been actively involved in the development of various environmental documents. However, the participation of local population is often facing difficulties; local NGOs still lack necessary expertise as well as funding to facilitate the process, while national NGOs mostly didn't manage to develop operational branches outside big towns. Mechanism for effective participation of actors and stakeholders in defining national priorities and participatory process in support of the preparation of the action programme on a whole is not finalized yet. There is no specific document related to a strategy of communication and public awareness on desertification.

Although no special campaign was organized for the desertification issues, the experience of other campaigns demonstrated the way to reach the local population efficiently. Especially the involvement of youth environmental organizations proved to be effective. NGOs have already built the practice of networking on specific sector problems, as well as the mechanisms of nominating and authorizing representatives to certain institutions. These mechanisms will be enacted also in the NAP development process and maintained afterwards.

Local government can be involved through routine governmental channels, as well as through newly emerged (however, still weak) organizations with horizontal linkages (e.g. the Association of Sakrebulos[4]).

It will take significant efforts to keep the level of information exchange with local communities high. First of all, the real understanding and interest to the problem has to be developed locally; practical and pragmatic approaches like, for instance, pilot projects on agricultural practices improvement, could serve as good stimuli for the dissemination of interest in population groups.

There was no commitment taken so far by governments of international partners in regard to involvement in the process of NAP preparation and implementation, because Georgia became a Party to the UNCCD just a few months ago and still has to prepare its first NAP. Nevertheless, the activities of foreign partners in interrelated sectors of Georgian economy (such as biodiversity conservation, land resources management, forestry management, agricultural practice improvement, etc.) indicate the possibility for future expansion of these activities onto desertification-related affairs as well. There is a significant potential for establishment of efficient linkages to the desertification issue within the framework of some ongoing and planned bi- and multilateral projects.

There was no analysis of past experience conducted so far for the evaluation of activities undertaken in the field of combatting desertification. Such activities definitely took place in past, including soviet-time measures

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[4] "Sakrebulo" (literally - "the assembly") - elective board with local governance power in Georgia.

designed to combat land degradation and erosion. These measures were targeting usually quite narrow objectives (e.g. to comply with certain standards on structural development of certain types of arable lands); their implementation was considered as the responsibility of single governmental structure alone (e.g., Ministry of Agriculture) and, for this reason, only regulatory instruments were usually employed. Not surprisingly, the results of such a policy seemed to be at least mixed and their positive effects (if any), being not supported locally, disappeared as soon as the regulatory framework changed in line with fundamental re-structuring of governance system in the 1990s.

Of course, the summarization and evaluation of that experience needs to apply new approaches, in light of the principles of sustainability. One particular conclusion that could be drawn from past lessons is the following: no single institution is able to carry out measures to combat desertification and land degradation successfully. Only joint and integrated efforts could promote sound measures and achieve their targets. Therefore the significant part of NAP preparation will involve local population and governments in affected regions of country.

Most recent effort to assess some of pressing aspects of the issue was undertaken through the development of the First National Communication of Georgia to the UNFCCC in 1999.[5] Identifying the vulnerability of ecosystems and sectors, the Communication suggests some measures to mitigate adverse effects on country economy and environment that will be considered in NAP drafting process.

In international context, bilateral agreements of Georgia with its neighbouring Armenia and Azerbaijan on the protection of environment include clear provisions on cooperation in regard to "sensitive transboundary ecosystems". Both of agreements emphasize the importance of regional collaboration in joining efforts to solve regional and global environmental problems. Yet there are no special actions and measures taken at the subregional and regional levels. Such activity is envisaged to start along with the NAP implementation process.

Therefore, local capacity-building complemented with the transboundary cooperation whenever feasible, should be considered as a vital element of NAP. With the privatization and land tenure reform approaching the final stage, local governments and populations possess more power in natural resources management; unfortunately, this not always implies that the responsibilities are also recognized and acknowledged.

The process of the NAP development can considerably benefit from "overlapping" activities in bordering sectors of environment protection. Nevertheless, consultation and coordination process between three Conventions (UNCCD, UNFCCC and Convention on Biodiversity Conservation) is not formalized and takes place only occasionally.

As for financing, Georgia has very limited sources of internal funding and - unfortunately - even worse lack of adequate management. Revenues from so-called "ecological" taxes that are imposed on the harmful substances emissions/discharges, fuel retail and natural resources use, should be spent on the environment protection; in practice, it never happens. By the way, these revenues are not negligible at all - even with the low collection rate, last year (1999) these three "ecological" taxes raised in total more than 20 millions GEL (more than US$10 million).

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[5] Prepared by the Center on Climate Research of MENRP, under the assistance of GEF-UNDP.

The Government has not determined specific mechanisms to ensure financing for combatting desertification. Moreover, it would be naive to expect that government will allocate sufficient funds from internal resources to combat desertification, even if it had these funds included in budget (e.g., earmarking the revenues from "ecological taxes") - too often in Georgia budget promises fail to turn into something real.

The use of private funds is problematic for several reasons, including the limited capacity of internal private financial institutions, as well as the issue of an important competitor - nation-wide social priorities (salaries and pensions arrears are very high in state-owned sector).

Local offices of UNDP, WB, TACIS, USAID, etc, as well as bilateral donors (Governments of France, Germany, Netherlands, Norway, UK, others) provide very important source of external special funding for environment; yet their availability for locals (outside big towns) is still low, and requirements for project design are higher than the local capacity in most areas and districts.

The UNCCD secretariat contributed US$35,000 for the process of the preparation of first Georgian NAP. Internal sources of the MENRP and other institutions can also be mobilized, but these will almost entirely come as in-kind contribution (space, facilities, etc.) as budgetary funds are extremely limited.

Although information systems on desertification at the national level do not exist, several agencies (e.g. Ministry of Agriculture and Food, State department of Statistics, etc.) collect data that could be used for relevant indicators, if these indicators would in turn exist. The problem is that even the data that was gathered is not properly used. Raw data is of no use for decision-making, and there is no mechanism for data processing to transform it into an useful information. An access to information is also troublesome for main actors, as the data is dispersed and often not communicated to other agencies at all, or subjected to "payments for services".

Again, it is the NAP on combat desertification that should address these issues first time in Georgia. With the assistance of UNCCD secretariat and partner countries, and with the motivation and commitment from the NCB and NFP along with other actors, the NAP is expected not to fail expectations.

REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

The Republic of Moldova is a small (33.8 thousand sq. km) and densely populated (129 men/sq. km) country, situated between west border of the Ukraine and east border of Romania. The agricultural sector predominating causes high dependence of the Moldova economy upon weather-climate conditions. In combination with human induced factors droughts rate increase in the areas with natural precipitations deficiency leads to the soils degradation - desertification.

The main document, defining aims, priorities and basic directions of sustainable country development, is "Strategical reference points of socio-economic development of Moldova up to 2005", approved by the Government Enactment (1998). Integration of ecological requirements into sectoral policy and forming of the ecological consciousness at all levels are called as one of the strategical priorities. The Government developed project of National Strategy of Sustainable Development "Moldova-21" (1999).

To the main negative factors, influencing national safety of the country, the Strategy attributes the following: reduced financial possibilities of selection and implementation of the above strategy; real economic depression and ineffective natural resources utilization management; political instability; investments deficit; shadow economy at scale.

The first strategical document in the nature protection area was the Long-term Complex Environment Protection and Rational Nature Resources Utilization Programme up to 2005 (1987). Among its major priorities it is necessary to note maintenance of the soils fertility by implementation of the hydrotechnical anti-erosion measures, eroded lands fertility rehabilitation, forest amelioration measures, anchoring and rehabilitation of the landslides.

As milestones in nature protection planning and forecasting are the National Strategical Programme (1996) and the National Action Plan (1997) in the field of the environment protection, elaborated and adopted in accordance with resolutions of the Conference held in Rio de Janeiro with financial support of the World Bank.

The Ministry of Environment and Territory Development is a body authorized to be engaged in the nature protection activity on behalf of the Government. It is responsible for the implementation of relevant United Nations conventions. The UNCCD implementation is coordinated by the National Commission to Combat Desertification (NC), set up in 2000, which is attached to the above Ministry. In its activity NC is guided by the mandate on the UNCCD implementation, approved in March 2000 by the Minister of the Environment and Territory Development. The NC organized translation of the text of the UNCCD in Romanian, some UNCCD materials were translated from English to Romanian and their adapted to Moldova conditions version was published in popular version.

The Government of the Republic of Moldova promotes the creation of necessary institutional, organizational and legal frames to fulfil the UNCCD requirements. The Ministry of Economy and Reforms informed districts administration about main NAP elements and defined main terms of its implementation.

On the whole in Moldova there are more than 20 legislative enactments in the field of environment protection and nature resources utilization. All of them represent basic state strategy in the above area, but they do not exceed the frames of so called "administrative regulating instruments" or "regulating for command and control ". As recent years experience shows, it is necessary to supplement present legislation with normative economy enactments. In this respect there are already some developed and approved legislative enactments, directed to the coming into force of the principle "Polluter pays".

Existing legislation envisages population information and it's participation in decision-making in the field of environmental protection. Constitution of the Republic of Moldova and other laws envisage the right of population to access to information and to healthy environment. The Republic of Moldova was the first state, which ratified Information Access, Public Participation in the Adoption of Environment Issues Resolutions Convention (Orhus, Denmark, 1998).

Process of decentralizing central bodies responsibilities including nature protection goes is continuing with the aim to expand responsibilities of the local bodies. Local public bodies have the following rights and obligations: approvements of the local nature resources utilization limits; supervision and control in the field of utilization and regeneration of the nature resources; authorization of the nature resources utilization; development and implementation of measures to protect or regenerate nature resources; taking stock of the nature resources.

At present in the Republic of Moldova, mainly in the towns function more than 200 non-governmental ecological organizations (NGOs) and their branches, actively participating in environment protection, including combat against desertification. Most of them aim at the resolving of different environment protection problems, but only few contribute to the implementation of practical steps to combat desertification.

The main tasks of NAP to combat desertification induced by drought are the following:

- creation on the whole Republic's territory of a green ecological frame of forest belts and bushes for amelioration of hydrological and hydrothermical agricultural lands regimes;
- development of norms and terms of agricultural crops irrigation depending on hydrothermical regime of territory;
- introducing into the crop rotation drought resistant ones (esparcet, winter wheat, sorghum for the grain, Sudan grass, Italian raigrass, winter barley);
- substantiation of rational nature resources utilization, directed towards stabilization of the landscapes ecological balance in the presence of droughty climate;
- setting up the regional drought monitoring in the frames of National Hydrometeorological Service and development of rational agroclimate potential usage depending on desertification processes;
- minimization of drought consequences by forecasting and planning measures for mitigation of their effects on human induced and natural ecosystems.

Among planned measures it is envisaged improvement of institutional and legal base; development and implementation of socio-economic and demographical regional strategies, local action plans for the areas severely affected by droughts and desertification; development of methods for assessment of desertification levels and registration of the drought affected territory perimeters; development and implementation of measures to prevent and combat droughts and various forms of soils and ecosystems degradation; implementation of the economic and legal mechanisms system for regulation and stimulation measures for minimizing desertification consequences and combating it; implementation of the sustainable agriculture system; inventory keeping, monitoring and implementation of measures to prevent and combat landslides.

The Republic of Moldova is a party of Danube Convention and from 1993 to 1999 it implemented Subregional Programme in the framework of the above Convention partially linked with desertification prevention issues. NAP implementation is supposed to take ten years. Major priority measures are oriented at restoring ecological balance of the territories, subjected to desertification processes.

The total costs of activities outlined by the Action Plan are estimated at 568 mln.lei. Measures for ecological rehabilitation of soils and managing agricultural production from the position of sustainability require considerable funds (almost 50 per cent of the total sum for the former and 47 per cent for the latter). The sources of financing are: budget allocations - 2.7 per cent of total cost; own means of economic subjects - 93; contributions by foreign financial institutions, different donors, including foreign ones - 3.6 per cent, extra budgetary funds - 0.7 per cent.

Environment status data and trends of its changing are contained in the following documents: annual environment quality reports, developed by Ministry of the Environment and Territory Development; annual reports on the population health and hygiene status, developed by Ministry of Public Health; periodic field reports on the status of some nature elements such as: land resources (soils), water quality, forest resources, etc; data of the Department for Statistical and Sociological Studies on toxic waste, investments into environment protection.

Due to economical problems present methodology and technology, level of laboratories equipment in the institutional frames do not conform to the international standard. In the conditions of the Republic of Moldova at national level methodology of complex monitoring of the processes of desertification combat is being developed, including: solving the problem of ecological

monitoring, based on decentralization of functions and setting up desertification monitoring subsystem; methodical provision of the monitoring - National Ecological Institute, Academy of Sciences; technical provision of monitoring - Ministry of Environment and Territory Development, Ministry of Agriculture and Processing Industry, Ministry of Transport and Communication; creation of material base, monitoring data collection and processing - competent ministries; data integration, processing, coordination of actions in this field.

ROMANIA

The accession of Romania to the Convention to Combat Desertification is considered a positive step for the progress of the Romanian economy, conservation of the environmental resources in Romania and integration into international community. Romania has a rich experience in desertification and drought control, reality supported by the achievements acquired in scientific and technical plans, which demonstrates the ability of the Romanian specialists in working out the difficult problems of desertification. Nevertheless, financial resources for transposing into practice the experience accumulated in this field are not available.

The present report emphasizes the need of major and drastic interventions, with extension in the southern, southeastern, eastern and central parts of Romania, in order to obtain real results in desertification control. Consequently, Romania is looking for internal and external (as assistance) financing sources, essential to this action.

Geographical and climatic characteristics of Romania, with special reference to drought processes are shown in Annex 2 of the National Report. Characteristic for Romania's climate is the high frequency of droughts, particularly in the low lands of the South, South-East and East of Romania where the annual mean temperature is between 10.5 and 11.3 0C (sometimes 12.5 - 12.7 0C) and rainfall is bellow 500mm/ per year (sometimes 250 - 300mm). These climatic parameters worsened during the period 1982-1994, this being the most droughty period from the history of the country.

Regarding desertification, this systemic phenomena is a result of drought, among many others. According to the definition of Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), about 2.2 million ha (10 per cent of country area) situated in the South-East of Romania (East of Muntenia, Dobrogea, and the South of Moldova) and consisting mostly of crop fields and a great surface of humid land in the Danube Delta, have less than 0.65 ratio between precipitation and evapotranspiration.

According to Palfay index (PI of 6….8) used today to characterize the dry regions, a region is considered dry if PI is higher than 6. Moreover, in the range 6….8, PI indicates regions easy affected by drought, where the frequency of dry years is 40-65 per cent. In the regions with PI less than 6 there is a lower frequency of dry years. The zones with PI in the range 6...8 (see the map in the Report) cover 40 per cent of the crop land of Romania, namely in the South, South-East and East of Romania. The regions with the PI in the range 4…6 represent 20 per cent of the crop land of Romania situated not only in the South and South-East of Romania but also in the West and the Central part of the country. The degradation process of the soil affects more than half of the land at national level (Annex 3 of the Report), and the most seriously degraded soils (surface erosion, deep erosion, landslides, wind erosion) represent about 7.262 million ha (30.6 per cent).

The region with the highest per cent of degraded soil and land slides phenomena is situated in the Moldavian Plateau, Subcarpati (between the valley of Trotus and Olt), Getic Plateau and Transilvanian Plateau, i.e. in the East, South and Central - North-Eastern part of the country.

Wind erosion is occurring in the far North-West of the country (Carei Plain), West (Banat Plain), South (Oltenia and Baragan Plains), South-East (Black Sea shore, Danube Delta) and East (Tecuci Plain). The crop fields under aridization are located in the South-East of Romania, just in the area with wind erosion (Dolj, Olt, Ialomita, Brăila, Galati counties).

The project "Development of rural areas in Romania - The Green Book" funded by PHARE and having as beneficiary the Ministry of Alimentation and Agriculture in Romania, analysed the rural area with the purpose of identifying the village problems and defining a strategy of rural development. The result of the project was preparation of a map on the degree of rural development in Romania, according to certain risk factors, as follows: geographic, demographic, economic, settlement, technical equipment of the localities, social and ecological ones. At the national level this shows that those communities affected by drought and aridization have a lot of difficulties in their development. These zones need large support and quick intervention to avoid implacable deterioration of them.

Taking into account this state of the things, in Romania all actions that try to reduce the effect of drought and aridization are part of the national and sectorial strategies. Chapter (iii) of the Report enumerates briefly national strategies that contain topics related to the objectives of UNCCD:

- Middle-term National Strategy for Economical Development of Romania;
- National Strategy for Sustainable Development;
- National Plan for Agriculture and Rural Development;
- National Action Program for Environmental Protection;
- Draft Strategy for Drought and Desertification Combat.

The common topics of these strategies are referring to:

- Establishment of optimal size and economically efficient exploitation and development of the structural reforms with the purpose of farms consolidation;
- Priority for security against natural disasters and accidents: drought, floods, landslides. In this field it is mentioned the exploitation of existing construction;
- Strategy actions for sustainable management of forests, a finding of the fact that in Romania the consequences of natural disaster and climatic changes take proportions, so that the necessity of forest management under risk becomes clear;
- Sustainable management of water resources according to international rules;
- Building of financial tools for items connected to the environment, to set gradually the EU "aquis" in the area of water, environment protection in industry, agriculture, soil protection and degraded land.

As a first measure of UNCCD implementation is the creation of Romanian National Committee for Desertification. It will be in charge of elaboration of national strategy and projects for desertification combat and drought prevention, updating of the strategy, monitoring and prognosis of soil quality in the zone subject to desertification, elaboration of project proposals for new law initiatives, identification of financial resources, mediatization of desertification and drought problems to aware the people and international community.

A draft Strategy to combat desertification and drought in Romania in the middle term (2000-2010) has been worked out. It is under the analysis of the institutions and ministries directly concerned and it will be finalized in the second quarter of year 2000. In addition, the actual legislation in Romania, adopted during the last 10 years, refers to aspects of protection and improvement of water and soil resources that, implicitly, tackle elements of

combating desertification and soil degradation: Land Law No. 18/1991; Law on Land Reclamation No. 84/1996; Law on Environmental Protection No. 137/1995; Law on Cadastre No. 7/1996; Forestry Code No. 26/1996; Law of Water No. 107/1996; Law on the Reclamation of Degraded Lands by Afforestation No 107/1999, Governmental Ordinance concerning the Association of Water Users for Irrigations No. 147/1999, Governmental Ordinance concerning the Establishment of the National Company "Land Reclamation" No. 23/2000.

The above legal instruments need to be improved. They must be better connected to each other and must be adapted to EU legislation and international standards.

The main institutions involved in combating desertification, protection and reclamation of degraded lands and drought prevention activities are: Ministry of Waters, Forests and Environmental Protection (MWFEP); research institutes subordinated to MWFEP, oriented on meteorology, hydrology, environmental engineering, forestry, Danube Delta; districtual agencies of environmental protection; Forest National Company; Ministry of Alimentation and Agriculture (MAA); "Gheorghe Ionescu Sisesti " Agriculture and Forestry Academy of Science and its all research institutes; Autonomous Company of Land Improvement; regional specialized institutes subordinated to the Ministry of Alimentation and Agriculture; offices of cadastre and land organization, etc.; NGOs and professional associations (like National Soil Science Society, "Progresul silvic" Society and Romanian Society for Sustainable Development). Local institutions (Forest Branches, district Agencies of Environmental Protection, district offices of Pedological and Agrochemical Studies, Bureau of Cadastre and Land Organization) together with the district branches of National Agency of Agricultural Consultancy (subordinated to the Ministry of Alimentation and Agriculture) and the specialists from Regional Agricultural Research Stations (subordinated to Agriculture and Forestry Academy of Science) are providing the information to the final users and also they ensure the expertise for combat and mitigation of long lasting drought and aridization phenomena.

Regarding international cooperation (chapter vi of the Report), it is considered that under specific geographical, social and economical conditions of Romania, the actions to combat desertification and drought must be developed together with land reclamation and watershed management (mostly in the hilly and mountains area). Chapter vii of the Report describes the actions that have been taken or will be taken to improve the economic environment, institutional organizations, expertise concerning desertification and monitoring of drought consequences (research, forestry, hydrological reclamation). Evolution of the funds of Ecological Restoration Programme of degraded lands by forestation for the period 2001-2050 is shown in chapter vii. In the structure of the current year budget (2000) the allocated funds rise to $450,000 as funds for degraded land improvement and $5,000,000 for reforestation of degraded lands. Romania will contribute yearly TO the SAPARD Program $75,000,000. About 20 per cent of this amount will be allocated to rural communities in the area affected by drought and aridization.

Operative actions are undertaken to monitor and forecast the meteorological and hydrological events as well as the soil quality within the areas affected by desertification and drought. Also, the forests and forestry soils have been monitored since 1990 both within an European and a national survey network (chapter ix).

III. GROUP OF ANNEX IV COUNTRIES

The Mediterranean basin is a region that has been inhabited for thousands of years by numerous cultures and civilizations. These have left an indelible mark on the environment and the landscape. In this region the recognition of the role of human action on desertification processes done by the United Nations

Convention to Combat Drought and Desertification (UNCCD) has been a major step forward in selecting policies and measures.

It is estimated that in the northern Mediterranean area, land degradation affects 99.4 million ha, corresponding to 32 per cent of the territory with arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid climate. This appraisal shows that land degradation has reached alarming levels in the northern Mediterranean region.

Within this framework, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain and Turkey have agreed to coordinate their action by creating a regional annex of the Northern Mediterranean which is the fourth regional implementation Annex of the UNCCD.

National Programmes to combat drought and desertification have already been presented by Portugal and Italy, while Spain has presented related guidelines. Greece has published and distributed to the public its provisional action plan. Turkey is still drawing up its programme.

Annex activities are coordinated by an interministerial committee that has set in motion a permanent mechanism for consultations among northern Mediterranean countries on the subject of efforts to combat degradation and desertification.

The group of countries of the Northern Mediterranean annex countries have worked during previous sessions of the Conference of the Parties and have been organized into single-theme workshops to identify some priorities in preparation for the Regional Action Programme contemplated by the UNCCD. Priorities have been discussed, integrated and approved by National Committees and by the NGOs of the Northern Mediterranean region. The drawing up of a Regional Action Programme based on these priorities is a joint undertaking of countries that sets out to raise awareness of the phenomenon and involve as many social actors as possible in the implementation of the UNCCD as well as the General Directorates of the European Commission in desertification-related problems.

The uniqueness of this region has been acknowledged and emphasized by international treaties and agreements, such as the Barcelona Convention of 1976 and the Barcelona Declaration of 1995 underpinning the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. These agreements have been laying the foundations, through specific plans of action, for the creation of a context to promote trade/exchanges and the development of all countries in the region.

At an interregional level, Annex IV countries aim to coordinate their actions and create synergies between regional and subregional programmes and other international programmes such as the Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP), the Short- and Medium-Term Priority Environmental Action Programme (SMAP) and the Mediterranean Environmental Technical Assistance Programme (METAP) existing already in the area.

The international scientific community is actively involved in efforts to seek effective solutions to prevent and alleviate desertification-related problems in the Mediterranean area, through international organizations such as UNEP, FAO and the European Commission. EU research and development programmes in particular provide the context in which scientific projects and collaboration are effected among northern Mediterranean countries. The main issues tackled have been the study of indicators, management of water, soil erosion, climate change and traditional technologies.

Future developments for the Annex IV group will consider the extension to other affected country Parties of the Northern Mediterranean region, continuing efforts to elaborate common projects on indicators, pilot areas, the sharing of information through a Clearing House Mechanism and the development of all possible synergies with other conventions and with North African countries.

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IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION

(a) REVIEW OF REPORTS ON IMPLEMENTATION OF AFFECTED COUNTRY PARTIES OF REGIONS OTHER THAN AFRICA, INCLUDING ON THE PARTICIPATORY PROCESS, AND ON EXPERIENCE GAINED AND RESULTS ACHIEVED IN THE PREPARATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF NATIONAL ACTION PROGRAMMES

(b) REVIEW OF THE REPORT ON PROGRESS MADE IN THE FORMULATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF SUBREGIONAL AND REGIONAL ACTION PROGRAMMES IN REGIONS OTHER THAN AFRICA

Addendum

PART ONE: SYNTHESIS OF INFORMATION CONTAINED IN NATIONAL REPORTS FROM NORTHERN MEDITERRANEAN AND OTHER AFFECTED COUNTRY PARTIES

PART TWO: PROGRESS MADE IN THE ANNEX CONCERNING IMPLEMENTATION AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL FOR THE NORTHERN MEDITERRANEAN

[1] ICCD/COP(4)/1.

GE.00-64522 (E)

Note by the secretariat

This report is in two parts. The first part provides a synthesis of information contained in national reports concerning northern Mediterranean and other affected country Parties. The second part deals with progress made in the Annex concerning implementation at the regional level for the northern Mediterranean. The annex contains the regional report of the group of Annex IV countries on implementation of the Convention.

CONTENTS

		Paragraphs	Page
PART ONE:	SYNTHESIS OF INFORMATION CONTAINED IN NATIONAL REPORTS FROM NORTHERN MEDITERRANEAN AND OTHER AFFECTED COUNTRY PARTIES	1 - 64	6
I.	INTRODUCTION	1 - 3	6
II.	NORTHERN MEDITERRANEAN AFFECTED COUNTRY PARTIES	4 - 27	6
A.	National reports received	4 - 5	6
B.	Synthesis of information contained in national reports	6 - 24	7
(i)	Strategies and priorities established within the framework of sustainable development plans and or policies	8 - 9	7
(ii)	Institutional measures taken to implement the Convention	10 - 15	8
(iii)	Participatory process in support of the preparation and implementation of the action programme	16	9
(iv)	Consultative process in support of the preparation and implementation of the national action programme and the partnership agreements with developed country Parties and other interested entities	17 - 18	10
(v)	Measures taken or planned within the framework of national action programmes, including measures to improve the economic environment, to conserve natural resources, to improve institutional organization, to improve knowledge of desertification and to monitor and assess the effects of drought	19 - 22	10
(vi)	Financial allocations from national budgets in support of implementation as well as financial assistance and technical cooperation received and needed, identifying and prioritizing requirements	23	11
(vii)	Review of the benchmarks and indicators utilized to measure progress and an assessment thereof	24	12

CONTENTS (continued)

		Paragraphs	Page
C.	Emerging trends in northern Mediterranean affected country Parties	25 - 27	12
III.	OTHER AFFECTED COUNTRY PARTIES	28 - 64	13
A.	National reports received	28 - 29	13
B.	Synthesis of information contained in national reports	30 - 64	13
(i)	Strategies and priorities established within the framework of sustainable development plans and/or policies	31 - 35	13
(ii)	Institutional measures taken to implement the Convention	36 - 41	14
(iii)	Participatory process in support of the preparation and implementation of the action programme	42 - 48	16
(iv)	Consultative process in support of the preparation and implementation of the national action programme and partnership agreements with developed country Parties and other interested entities	49	17
(v)	Measures taken or planned within the framework of national action programmes, including measures to improve the economic environment, to conserve natural resources, to improve institutional organization, to improve knowledge of desertification and to monitor and assess the effects of drought	50 - 52	17
(vi)	Financial allocations from national budgets in support of implementation as well as financial assistance and technical cooperation received and needed, identifying and prioritizing requirements	53 - 54	18
(vii)	Review of the benchmarks and indicators utilized to measure progress and an assessment thereof	55	19
C.	Emergiag trends in other affected country Parties	56 - 64	19

CONTENTS (continued)

		Paragraphs	Page
PART TWO:	PROGRESS ACHIEVED IN THE ANNEX CONCERNING IMPLEMENTATION AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL FOR THE NORTHERN MEDITERRANEAN	65 - 66	21

Annex

Report of the Group of Annex IV countries on the implementation of the UNCCD 23

PART ONE: SYNTHESIS OF INFORMATION CONTAINED IN NATIONAL REPORTS FROM NORTHERN MEDITERRANEAN AND OTHER AFFECTED COUNTRY PARTIES

I. INTRODUCTION

1. In its decision 11/COP.1 on procedures for the communication of information and review of implementation of the Convention, the Conference of the Parties:

(a) Requested affected country Parties to provide a description of the strategies established pursuant to article 5 of the Convention and any relevant information on their implementation;

(b) Requested affected country Parties implementing action programmes pursuant to articles 9 to 15 of the Convention to provide a detailed description of the programmes and their implementation. Decision 11/COP.1 states that reports should be as concise as possible to facilitate their review;

(c) Requested the Parties to submit their reports to the permanent secretariat in one of the official languages of the Conference of the Parties at least six months prior to the session at which they are to be reviewed;

(d) Asked the permanent secretariat to compile summaries of reports submitted and prepare, in addition, a synthesis of the reports setting out the trends emerging in the implementation of the Convention.

2. In its decision 5/COP.2, the Conference of the Parties reaffirmed its decision 11/COP.1 and annexed document ICCD/COP(3)/INF.3, a guide for the submission of national reports under the Convention.

3. In its decision 4/COP.3 concerning its programme of work (para. 1 (a) (iii)), the Conference of the Parties decided to include in the agenda of its fourth session and, if necessary, its fifth session, the review of reports of affected country Parties of regions other than Africa on implementation of the Convention, including on the participatory process, and on experience gained and results achieved in the preparation and implementation of national action programmes.

II. NORTHERN MEDITERRANEAN AFFECTED COUNTRY PARTIES

A. National reports received

4. The secretariat sent a first letter of reminder to northern Mediterranean affected country Parties concerning their national reports on the implementation of the Convention (Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Spain and Turkey). In this letter, dated 1 February 2000, it requested them to transmit their reports by 25 April 2000, i.e. six months before the first date set for the fourth session of the Conference of the Parties. By 25 May 2000, national reports had been

received from Greece, Italy (summary), Portugal, Spain and Turkey. A synthesis of information contained therein is presented in the following chapter. A compilation of the executive summaries appears in document ICCD/COP(4)/3/Add.3/A1. The full reports may be consulted on the Internet site of the CCD secretariat, at the address www.unccd.int. It should be noted that the reports submitted by the above countries and synthesized in this document relate to national activities carried out in each country in the context of implementation of the Convention.

5. The reports for the most part follow the secretariat's recommendations on the drafting of reports, in accordance with decision 11/COP.1, as confirmed by decision 5/COP.2. These recommendations are detailed in document ICCD/COP(1)/INF.3, which provides a guide to the submission of national reports. Some countries have adapted this guide for the layout of their own reports. All the reports contain summaries.

B. Syntheses of information contained in national reports

6. The reports provide a good general coverage and overall picture of progress in implementation of the Convention in each country. They generally take time to describe their internal, political and administrative organizations and the functions and responsibilities of their various ministerial services. They discuss their endeavours to organize coordination in the framework of intersectoral activities, both those relating to the environment and those concerning implementation of the Convention to Combat Desertification. They briefly describe how each respective country is affected, giving technical and geographical information about their situation. They also describe the various actions under way in the sectors of the environment and of natural resources, since these are generally actions that have been in place for a number of years, and hence predate the Convention.

7. The same reports have also indicated the other international obligations which these country Parties have contracted, notably by virtue of their membership of the European Union, as for example in the cases of Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain. They likewise note the efforts undertaken to strengthen solidarity within the Mediterranean area through the Blue Plan and the Barcelona Conference of 1995. They emphasize all the action undertaken to formulate a regional programme of action. They furthermore point out the need to strengthen international scientific cooperation and to intensify exchanges, either in the framework of the Convention or within other pre-existing frameworks.

(i) Strategies and priorities established within the framework of sustainable development plans and/or policies

8. The reports received comment on all the various national arrangements put in place by the political authorities with a view to sustainable development, protection of the environment and, more generally, national planning and the programming of public interventions. These arrangements are of several kinds: they involve either ministries themselves or general departments of ministries or public authorities, or else they are comprised of mechanisms for interministerial coordination, and intersectoral commissions and working groups. The reports focus on the particular role of the Ministry of Environment of the country in question and some detail the functions of specific departments of the technical ministries. They mention the accession of the countries Parties to other conventions relating to the environment.

9. The reports describe the national strategies adopted in the above-mentioned frameworks. These strategies have generally been reflected in plans adopted by the national representative offices. Greece and Spain, in their reports, describe their sustainable development strategies, as well as the resulting plans and programmes on physical planning, at both local and national level. These plans are to focus on combating desertification. Turkey details the stages of the formulation of its National Environmental Action Plan, which itself forms part of the eighth five-year plan for economic and social development, and is to be harmonized with the NAP. Greece, Portugal, Spain and Turkey mention various priority programmes included in their national strategies for forest development and fire control, protecting catchment basins and combating erosion, hydrology and water management. The reports show that these priority programmes are giving rise to projects conducted under the responsibility of the appropriate ministries. However, very little information is provided on these projects. Italy refers to the links existing between the various sectors of industry, energy, urbanization and tourism in its environmental policies. Spain refers to its LUCDEME programme to combat desertification in the Mediterranean instituted in 1981 after the Nairobi Conference on Desertification in 1977, and its eight sectoral plans already under way.

(ii) Institutional measures taken to implement the Convention

10. The reports describe how the countries concerned have instituted specific coordination for implementation of the Convention. All the countries have created a coordination body. However, the reports each indicate that this body is not a legal entity, but a "coordination mechanism". This mechanism consists of a national committee or commission or a steering committee, depending on the country, and a specifically designated national focal point, whose responsibilities differ from one country to another but which in all cases acts as coordinator. Portugal has, moreover, created five Portuguese regional focal points. In most of the countries, these committees or commissions have been created by the technical ministries, i.e. those responsible for the environment or agriculture, and have sometimes been given official status by the President of the Council of Ministers (as in Italy). After having adopted its NAP, Portugal dissolved the coordinating mechanism and established a national committee to coordinate the NAP, as well as a national desertification observatory. Spain plans to set up a national committee to implement the NAP.

11. These coordinating mechanisms are placed under the responsibility either of the Ministry of Agriculture (Greece, Portugal) or of the Ministry of Environment (Italy, Spain, Turkey). All the reports indicate the composition of the national committee, which comprises representatives of the technical ministries involved, as well as a representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and scientists, either appointed *intuitu personae* or representing ministries concerned with research. These mechanisms are therefore truly intersectoral. The number of members of these national committees ranges from 7 in Spain to 30 in Portugal. In Spain, the small coordination committee relies on a much larger national committee. In Portugal, the coordination mechanism set up to formulate the NAP was supported by a scientific council, now dissolved with the adoption of the NAP. Some working groups or subcommittees are associated at national or local level with these mechanisms, under the coordination of the national focal point.

12. The technical ministries involved are always those responsible for the environment and agriculture or, more specifically, rural development, forestry and water management; the ministry responsible for public works is, moreover, represented within the mechanism. In Greece, there is also a representative of the Ministry of National Economy, in Spain a representative of the Ministry of the Economy, in Italy a representative of the Treasury Ministry, in Portugal a representative of the Ministry of Finance, and in Turkey the Director-General of the National Meteorological Service. Civil society is generally represented through NGOs and local collective bodies. Only Portugal mentions the presence of representatives of industrial or commercial firms and professional groupings of farmers within the local committees.

13. The reports briefly describe the functions of the coordination mechanisms. These may be summarized as follows: to coordinate information and communication regarding the Convention, and to sensitize the public to the fight against desertification; to participate in the preparation of synthesis documents on desertification; to formulate proposals relating to the NAP and projects to combat desertification; to coordinate and monitor national and local programmes, to promote regional cooperation, as well as cooperation with the European Union and relevant international organizations; and to promote research on all issues relating to desertification, drought and land degradation. However, the reports provide few details about the functioning of these mechanisms (methods of work, frequency of meetings and timetables for action).

14. The reports make little reference to the physical and financial resources available to the coordination mechanisms for their operation and to finance planned activities, meetings, working groups, documents to provide public information and means of communication. The report of Greece indicates that in 1999 Greece provided a budget of US$ 120,000 for its coordinating body, and hopes to have a larger amount available in the year 2000.

15. As regards measures relating to communication, the reports indicate that all the countries have translated the basic documents of the Convention and more generally those relating to the environment and the Action 21 programme into their national languages. The focal points are charged with disseminating these documents, but little information is provided on how this is being done. Turkey, Italy and Greece each mention the creation of an Internet site relating to the Convention, and Spain reports that it is preparing its own site.

(iii) Participatory process in support of the preparation and implementation of the action programme

16. The reports generally describe well the principles and objectives of the participatory processes already set in motion or about to be established. However, most of them give only few details about their operation and their methods of work. Greece, Spain and Turkey explain that these processes rely on the existence of sectoral working groups, which have a dual role: they must, on the one hand, provide for information and awareness-raising about the Convention and, on the other, gather data on desertification, as well as the views of the various communities concerned. Such communities, as mentioned in the reports, are mainly local bodies (municipalities, provincial and regional authorities), local professional groups of farmers, and environmental protection associations. Greece and Portugal indicate that the operation of these participatory processes is not always easy, in particular because of their novelty and unfamiliar nature, and because of the lack of an immediate response from the populations and difficulties

of communication between the stakeholders. Italy has organized a series of national awareness-raising seminars in various regions. Portugal gives an insight into the scale of the participatory process, whose public meetings have attracted some 2,200 persons, 26 public institutions and 7 private institutions.

(iv) Consultative process in support of the preparation and implementation of the national action programme and the partnership agreements with developed country Parties and other interested entities

17. The actions described in the reports received relate both to the preparation of a regional programme of action and point to the need to strengthen the partnerships existing within the framework of scientific research and international exchanges of data and methods.

18. In addition, the reports of Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain recall that these countries are members of the European Union and are therefore bound by frameworks of partnership. The countries are linked by the Treaty of Rome (1957) and by the Treaty of Maastricht (1992). The reports point out that sustainable development is one of the objectives pursued by countries members of the European Union, as translated into a community policy and national policies on the environment, as well as into laws and regulations within each member State. The Fifth European Community Programme of Action in relation to the environment, adopted in 1993, envisaged specific measures for nature conservation, the protection of water and soils, and the analysis of environmental impacts in the context of combating desertification. Furthermore, the reports note that the common agricultural policy now includes agri-environmental measures appropriate to combating desertification and therefore eligible for European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF) support. Furthermore, the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) supports developmental action in "disadvantaged" areas of the Union, which are mostly to be found in the group in Annex IV countries. Lastly, the reports also make reference to other community programmes of relevance in combating desertification, such as the fourth and fifth framework programmes for research and the MEDI-Campus and MEDALUS programmes.

(v) Measures taken or planned within the framework of national action programmes, including measures to improve the economic environment, to conserve natural resources, to improve institutional organization, to improve knowledge of desertification and to monitor and assess the effects of drought

19. The reports show that all the countries are addressing the issue of national action programmes. The status of the NAP differs from one country to another: the NAP in Spain is in preparation, the first edition having been approved in 1997 and the guidelines in June 2000; the summary of the NAP Greece was approved in 1999; the NAP for Italy was approved in February 2000; the NAP for Portugal was approved in June 1999; and the NAP in Turkey is currently being defined on a basis approved in September 1999. Two NAPs have therefore been approved and are now entering their first phase of implementation - this is the case for Italy and Portugal - while three others are still in preparation (in Greece, Spain and Turkey). The reports give few details about the methodology and stages of preparation of the NAPs.

20. The reports briefly present the strategies proposed within the NAP framework and adopted in two cases. These strategies envisage various measures of a general nature that may be summarized as follows:

(a) Some general measures mainly concern the determination of areas affected by desertification, and information and awareness-raising for the public living in these areas; the preparation of a compendium of the problems encountered during droughts; a review of past experience; the establishment of monitoring and warning systems, generally based on remote sensing, and networks for measurements relying on the meteorological stations and measurement stations created for this purpose (particularly in Spain). Portugal has also set up a national desertification observatory;

(b) Some programming and planning measures must be incorporated into the already existing programmes of the ministries concerned. These deal with land-use planning in relation to the vulnerability of land in question, and methods to monitor action taken within the NAP framework;

(c) Measures aimed at strengthening national scientific research and international scientific cooperation and at intensifying exchanges are also planned.

21. NAP thematic priorities are generally indicated in the reports, but with no discussion of specific projects. They concern the improvement and rehabilitation of the most affected zones and aid to support the local population, reforestation of vulnerable zones, protection of forests against fires, management and protection of catchment basins, as well as control of erosion, management of water resources and the improvement of cropping practices.

22. Some reports mention various legal, institutional and regulatory measures related to combating desertification. In Italy, a law is in preparation to give the NAP official status. In Greece, a law was passed in 1999 on sustainable development, which includes efforts to combat desertification, and legal provisions have been adopted concerning the cadastral survey. In Turkey, a law including provisions on combating desertification is in preparation. The reports also express the concern of country Parties to obtain real official status for the NAP, either through instruments incorporating it into planning laws or by the adoption of a specific law. The reports indicate that the coordination mechanisms sometimes encounter difficulties in completing and obtaining official approval of the NAP.

(vi) Financial allocations from national budgets in support of implementation as well as financial assistance and technical cooperation received and needed, identifying and prioritizing requirements

23. In general, the reports give few details about financial allocations in support of implementation of the Convention. However, the report of Greece indicates that the necessary funding for planned NAP activities will come from the State budget, although some funds will be requested from the European Union, particularly within the ERDF and EAGGF framework, or else from special contributions. Portugal reports that funding will be obtained through a redirection of resources already allocated. Turkey intends to set up a special fund to combat desertification.

(vii) Review of the benchmarks and indicators utilized to measure progress and an assessment thereof

24. All the reports testify to the interest of the countries of this region in benchmarks and indicators. They also point out that monitoring systems have been in existence for a number of years and need to be strengthened and harmonized. The reports indicate that Greece, Spain and Turkey are relying on the DPSIR system of indicators (State, pressures, response), on which important work is being coordinated by the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development and undertaken by numerous affected country Parties. These countries are endeavouring to adapt them to their own situation and put them into practice, but the reports do not describe the results achieved. Portugal uses conventional indicators on desertification. The reports say little about indicators to monitor implementation of the Convention.

C. Emerging trends in northern Mediterranean affected country Parties

25. The national reports received provide an overview of progress in implementation of the Convention in the countries concerned. All of these countries deal more particularly with their own mechanisms of coordination, as well as the preparation and implementation of national action programmes. As indicated in paragraph 5 above, the reports broadly follow the recommended structure. They deal at length with political and administrative organizations and with the functions of the various public services in each country. They also describe the strategies and objectives of future projects, without detailing the methods of work and planned stages for NAP formulation.

26. The reports show that all the countries have established coordination bodies, which are in fact mechanisms comprising a national committee or commission and a focal point. These mechanisms have responsibility for communication on all matters relating to the Convention, ensuring coordination between ministries and other bodies, both public and private, concerned with desertification, as well as preparing the NAPs and guiding the various phases of their formulation and eventual adoption. The NAPs are at stages of advancement that differ from one country to another. This coordination and the willingness to give official status to the NAPs seem to be giving rise to some difficulties. As a whole, the work of NAP formulation and implementation is well advanced in each country, but the reports provide few details about specific projects to be undertaken within the NAP framework, about financial allocations to the coordination mechanisms and for current projects undertaken to combat desertification and being implemented within the framework of plans or programmes drawn up prior to the Convention.

27. The reports give the views of the country Parties on the participatory processes and some information about the establishment of these processes. Some reports underline the difficulty of the new exercise of dialogue between the stakeholders. The reports show, on the one hand, the complexity of the political and administrative organization of the country Parties and, on the other, the difficulties of coordinating the intersectoral components, such as sustainable rural development, environmental protection, integrated management of natural resources, planning and regional development. The northern Mediterranean countries have very long-standing administrative structures and technical services and any new distribution of competencies may prove problematical. Since combating desertification and ensuring sustainable development is, by nature, intersectoral and interdisciplinary, the focal points and coordination committees have therefore sometimes encountered certain difficulties.

III. OTHER AFFECTED COUNTRY PARTIES

A. National reports received

28. A letter of reminder was sent by the secretariat to other affected country Parties: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Republic of Moldova and Romania. As of 25 May 2000, national reports had been received from all countries. This report is based on those reports. Summaries of the national reports are contained in ICCD/COP(4)/3/Add.3 (A). No joint communication pursuant to decision 11/COP.1, paragraph 6, has been received by the secretariat. All full reports can be accessed on the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) Web site (www.unccd.int).

29. The format of the reports is standardized according to decision 11/COP.1 reaffirmed by decision 5/COP.2, and the Help Guide (ICCD/COP(3)/INF.3). A limit of 30 pages set by the Help Guide for reports was respected by all Parties. However, as regards content and style of presentations, and especially a degree of compliance with section structures as proposed by the Help Guide, the reports vary in content.

B. Synthesis of information contained in national reports

30. All reports presented mainly factual information while some provided critical and evaluative analysis as well. It should be pointed out that this synthesis might not reflect all the richness and detail of the individual reports as its main objective is to indicate some facts of general interest.

(1) Strategies and priorities established within the framework of sustainable development plans and/or policies

31. With respect to national plans and strategies available in social and economic areas, which are relevant to combating desertification, the majority of reports supplied fairly ample information. They confirm that in most cases the principles of sustainable development, environment protection and effective utilization of natural resources, including the combat against desertification have been, or are being, integrated, where appropriate, into all government programmes and policies.

32. Most of the reports mention strategies related to socio-economic development. Azerbaijan states that the country has started working on the national programme for sustainable development. Georgia reports on the Indicative Plan for Social and Economic Development as the main policy document that determines the country's development strategy in the short term. This plan, of non-binding character, is developed annually by the Ministry of the Economy and includes action to be taken in different sectors, including the environmental sector. The indicative plan for 2000 includes the implementation of projects on protecting the soil from erosion and improving soil fertility as part of the agricultural sector development programme. The Republic of Moldova mentions its "Strategical reference points of socio-economic development up to 2005" as the country's main document defining aims, priorities and basic direction of sustainable development, which was approved by the Government in 1998. In this document the integration of ecological requirements into sectoral policies as well as the

formation of the ecological consciousness at all levels are listed as strategic priorities. Romania mentions the Mid-term National Strategy for Economic Development, which contains, inter alia, the main national strategies and action plans relevant to the objectives of the Convention.

33. All reports also confirm the existence of national environmental strategies and/or plans and programmes, albeit in different forms and at different stages of development or implementation. Some countries have elaborated and adopted both national strategies and national action plans for the protection of the environment. Other country Parties have elaborated only national environmental action plans. All the reports note that the support of and financial assistance by the World Bank played an important role in the preparation of these strategies and plans on the protection of environment. Furthermore, the reports show that in national environmental strategies and/or plans and programmes the combat against desertification and other forms of land degradation is considered one of the main priorities. This is also the case with a wide range of sectoral policies or programmes. All country Parties single out agriculture and forestry as sectors particularly relevant to combating desertification, drought and soil erosion. Water management, energy and social problems (rural development, uplifting of living standards, population) are also mentioned in more than one report as sectors where State policies take into account desertification and land degradation problems.

34. National biodiversity policies as well as climate change projects are considered in all reports as playing an important role in overall environmental strategy and having certain linkages with the combat against desertification. No report raises the issue of synergy in implementing the three conventions at national and local level. It is stated that consultations and the coordination process with regard to the three conventions are not yet formalized and take place occasionally. Armenia stresses the need to avoid possible duplications and to exclude overlapping and uncoordinated action in the preparation of the NAP.

35. Land reforms, privatization and decentralization are considered in some reports as strategies having a serious impact on, and linkages with, national strategies in the field of combating desertification. In this context, the reports stressed that giving to local governments and population more power in natural resources management, unfortunately, does not always imply that the responsibilities are also recognized and acknowledged. Privatization, as well as reform of the agro-industrial sector and land-tenure system are presented in the report as giving rise to some problems concerning the rational use of land and conservation of its fertility.

(ii) Institutional measures taken to implement the Convention

36. Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Republic of Moldova report on the existence of a national coordination body (NCB) on desertification. In Armenia, Azerbaijan and Republic of Moldova, after accession, relevant ministries/committees (related to the environment and natural resources) were approved by the Government as the NCB. In Georgia, the Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources Protection became the NCB due to the general allocation of responsibilities on governmental statutory bodies. Nevertheless, some changes may take place with respect to the designation of the NCB as Georgia is considering as an option to transfer NCB functions from the Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources Protection to an intersectoral body that is planned to be established in the form of the State coordinating

commission to combat desertification. Romania, which has not yet designated an NCB, reported on the project to establish a national committee for desertification control. This committee will be in charge of establishing and updating national strategy and projects to combat desertification and mitigate drought consequences, monitoring and forecasting the state of soil and water in areas exposed to desertification, elaborating proposals for new laws, mobilizing financial resources, undertaking awareness campaigns to inform the population about desertification problems and promoting international cooperation.

37. As regards national focal points (NFPs) for UNCCD, they exist in all countries but NFP functions are not clearly defined in the reports. In many cases they are high-ranking officials (deputy ministers or heads of department) from NCB. In the case of Georgia, the acting NFP was designated long before the ratification of the Convention and played a key role in the ratification process.

38. In the majority of countries, national multisectoral coordinating commissions on combating desertification have been established by NCBs. Cross-cutting and the multidisciplinary character of coordinating commissions are reflected by the participation of senior staff from relevant ministries and State departments, academic circles and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The coordinating commissions do not have financial autonomy and are financed from the State budget through NCBs. Georgia also listed relevant ministries, State departments, research institutions and NGOs supporting the NCB.

39. Reports mentioned that countries are in various stages of the NAP process. Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia are elaborating their NAPs. The Republic of Moldova reported on the adoption by the Government in January 2000 of the national action programme on combating desertification. Its implementation is supposed to take 10 years, major priority being the restoration of the ecological balance of the territories subjected to desertification processes. Romania is developing a strategy on combating desertification and drought.

40. On the legal and regulatory framework most reports contain rather voluminous and detailed information. It is stated that the process of radical socio-economic reforms in country Parties was accompanied by the adoption of a new constitution and numerous laws in different areas, including environmental protection. However, the development and adaptation of new legislation do not always keep pace with continuous and rapid transformations, which in some cases may hinder implementation of new strategies and policies, including those aimed at the protection of the environment. Armenia mentions that the new Constitution, adopted in 1995, guarantees the protection of the environment, as well as the reproduction and rational use of natural resources. The same country reports on the adoption in 1999 of a new educational law, which declares cultivation of an ecological outlook as one of the principles of the State policy in the area of education. The law envisages, inter alia, including the desertification problems into general education programmes. Georgia expressed strong remarks with regard to the content of the legal framework.

41. All reports recognize that the NAP process should review existing legislation and institutional framework and recommend measures to adopt current legislation or introduce new enactment that will ensure a coherent and functional legal and regulatory framework for proper and comprehensive implementation of the UNCCD requirements in the country Party. Some

reports note that the present environmental legislation does not fully correspond to the requirements of new international standards, treaties and conventions including the UNCCD. It is stated that action for approximation of national legislation to the Convention has to be included in the NAP, for example, the preparation of draft laws, regulations (sub-laws) and amendments to existing legislation concerning desertification issues, as well as the preparation of draft projects on institutional arrangements dealing with desertification issues. Armenia singles out the legislation in the area of land and other natural resources utilization as one that needs improvement, particularly in the following directions: toughening of existing enforcement measures; and stimulation of the implementation of obligatory action for the conservation of land resources by citizens by means of economic mechanisms.

(iii) Participatory process in support of the preparation and implementation of the action programme

42. According to all reports, the country Parties recognize that there is a need to develop, within general strategies, some specific policies and measures aimed at enhancing the participatory process in support of the preparation and implementation of action programmes to combat desertification. In this context most reports stress the importance of information and awareness-raising policies on different aspects of the combat against desertification and soil degradation. A wealth of related activities is presented in the reports, ranging from organizing seminars and workshops, at national and local levels, to translating UNCCD documents into local languages, free distribution of educational materials and commemorating the World Day to Combat Desertification on 17 June.

43. Reports state that mass media play a key role in the process. Through the press conferences, briefings and press releases, all NCBs facilitate informational support for developing public opinion on environmental concerns. The importance of special radio and television programmes can hardly be overestimated in this respect. Mass media campaigns on desertification and land degradation organized by NCBs give rise to active reaction on the part of local populations, including mass letters to the press and television/radio stations as valuable feedback.

44. Non-governmental organizations, which traditionally have been very active in the field of environmental protection, are to contribute significantly to unfolding the UNCCD process in different ways. For example, representatives of NGOs have been appointed as members of all multisectoral coordinating committees on combating desertification and they participate together with government officials in the development and formulation of NAPs. In Azerbaijan, NGOs have elected from among themselves a coordinating NGO that directs efforts of all NGOs in the field of desertification and is in permanent contact with NCB.

45. It is noted that democratization facilitates the participatory process and awareness raising in support of the preparation and implementation of action programmes. Armenia and the Republic of Moldova mention that the new constitution guarantees access to environmental information for any citizen of the country. The process of decentralization leads to a redistribution of rights and obligations with regard to environmental and natural resources at national, regional and local levels in favour of the local levels.

46. In view of the necessity of creating educational, training and scientific grounds for combating desertification, proposals on initiating special courses in environmental protection, including land conservation, for general and specialized education systems have been prepared in one country Party and submitted to the Government for consideration.

47. The special role of women, youth and student NGOs in the UNCCD process is recognized in more than one report. In Azerbaijan, the national action plan on gender includes provisions relevant to the combat against desertification, soil degradation and unsustainable utilization of land resources. The report of Georgia states that the involvement of youth environmental organizations proved to be effective.

48. Some reports mention the development of effective international cooperation between NGOs, particularly with regard to the transboundary projects of neighbouring countries, and they stress that external support by international organizations and donors is required for further strengthening the role of NGOs and local actors in the UNCCD process.

(iv) Consultative process in support of the preparation and implementation of the national action programme and partnership agreements with developed country Parties and other interested entities

49. As recent Parties to the Convention, the reports submitted by these Parties provide very little information on the consultative process. Most of them are still in the process of preparing their NAPs. Georgia states that the activities of foreign partners in biodiversity conservation, land resources management, forestry, agriculture, etc. indicate the possibility for future expansion of these activities into desertification-related areas as well. Nevertheless, within the consultative process on UNCCD-related issues some reports note the active role played by UNDP local offices, as well as by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). Some reports also mention international cooperation within regional projects, such as the Caspian Ecological Programme and European Regional Working Team on Drought. There is a significant potential for the establishment of efficient linkages to the desertification issue within the framework of some ongoing and planned bilateral and multilateral projects.

(v) Measures taken or planned within the framework of national action programmes, including measures to improve the economic environment, to conserve natural resources, to improve institutional organization, to improve knowledge of desertification and to monitor and assess the effects of drought

50. All reports contain fairly voluminous information on this subject but the degree of compliance with the Help Guide, as well as presentation of information on specific sections, differ greatly. In some reports, not all sections are covered. Other reports discuss mainly measures and activities that have only been submitted for consideration rather than formulated or implemented.

51. With regard to an exhaustive diagnosis on past experiences, most reports state that evaluations and studies of pre-transition activities in the field of controlling desertification and land degradation were carried out before the start of NAP formulation. The reports show that past activities were usually targeting quite narrow objectives; their implementation was considered the responsibility of a single governmental structure and, for this reason, only regulatory instruments were usually employed. Some reports showed that positive effects (if any), not being supported locally, disappeared as soon as the regulatory framework changed in line with a fundamental restructuring of the governance system. Georgia also stressed that only joint and integrated efforts could promote sound measures and achieve their targets. Therefore the significant part of NAP preparation will involve local populations and governments in affected regions of country.

52. The research related to desertification conducted in the past by scientific institutions had generated interesting results, which are extensive enough to be worth reviewing. Besides, a lot of geographical, geological, climatological, hydrological and other data were gathered through the decades; yet most of this data needs to be rearranged to be usable in modern data processing. On established technical programmes and functional integrated projects to combat desertification, most reports provide a long list of mainly new action being implemented and planned launching of measures in different relevant areas.

(vi) Financial allocations from national budgets in support of implementation as well as financial assistance and technical cooperation received and needed, identifying and prioritizing requirements

53. The information provided on this subject appears to be rather sketchy but some countries mention some financial mechanisms (ecotax, national fund, etc.). On adopted financial mechanisms, Georgia mentions that revenues from "ecological" taxes at the local level on the harmful substances/emissions/discharges, retail fuel and natural resources use, should, in accordance with legal requirements, be spent on environmental protection, including the combat against desertification. But the report also states that seemingly this never happens in practice because local governments prefer to divert such revenue to other purposes, such as social spending. The adopted national action programme of the Republic of Moldova is presented as being financed by economic actors (93 per cent of total cost), by the State budget (2.7 per cent), by foreign donors and organizations (3.6 per cent) and by extra-budgetary resources (0.7 per cent).

54. In other cases, the elaboration of the concept of a national fund to combat desertification is reported. It is envisaged that this fund will be financed jointly by the central government, private sector and donors. The main objective of the fund is ensuring the participation of local actors in the implementation of programmes to combat desertification. Some reports contain concrete figures of fund requirements for specific programmes and projects relevant to combating desertification and land degradation. Azerbaijan reports the existence of a reserve fund for the protection of the environment, which is administered by the ministry of finance and State committee for ecology. The fund is financed through ecological fines and payments for environmental pollution. Yet this fund has very limited resources.

(vii) Review of the benchmarks and indicators utilized to measure progress and an assessment thereof

55. Most reports indicate the need for foreign assistance in establishing and implementing the state-of-art monitoring and information systems on environmental protection and desertification. Four reports address mainly the issues of monitoring and information systems on desertification. Azerbaijan has completed the elaboration of a unified system of ecological monitoring, including the monitoring of desertification and land degradation. This system is to replace five separate monitoring systems that have been used so far by five different bodies.

C. Emerging trends in other affected country Parties

56. The situation in individual countries differs greatly, which complicates the formulation of clear common trends. The reports show that most country Parties are still at the initial stage of the implementation of the Convention. This is partly due to the recent ratification of the Convention by most of the reporting country Parties but also to a greater extent due to very serious economic, social and political difficulties, which those countries have been facing since the beginning of the process of radical socio-economic transformation.

57. All reporting country Parties are affected by desertification but to various degrees of severity. At the same time, the negative impact of land degradation, desertification and frequent droughts on the economy of the Parties can hardly be overestimated. This impact tends to grow and is considered an obstacle to overall development, particularly in countries where agriculture plays an important role in the economy.

58. Another specific feature of reporting country Parties is that they are undergoing a process of radical socio-economic transformation, especially with regard to the four newly independent republics of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. As is typical for transition countries, this transformation takes time and is accompanied by serious and prolonged economic difficulties, which are in some cases aggravated by political disturbances. At the same time, transition presents an opportunity to review the legislation framework.

59. In spite of continuing socio-economic problems, the reports demonstrate the commitment of the Parties to the Convention and their active efforts aimed at developing the UNCCD process and in a relatively short period of time, they have made remarkable progress in launching it. Soil conservation, and combating land degradation and desertification have been added to new national policies and strategies for environmental protection, as well as to sectoral policies, especially on agriculture, forestry, water management, energy, transportation and rural development.

60. Progress has been achieved on institutional measures. National coordination bodies, national focal points and national multisectoral coordinating commissions on combating land degradation desertification have been, or are being established in reporting country Parties. The preparation of national action programmes on combating desertification is progressing in four countries, while in the Republic of Moldova a 10-year NAP has recently been adopted.

61. Certain progress has been achieved in respect to enhancing the participatory process in support of the preparation of NAPs and implementation of the UNCCD. Democratization, decentralization, privatization and land reforms contribute to further development of the participatory process, facilitate the activities of the NGOs concerned and ensure the increasing role of the local population, including women and youth, in the UNCCD process. Local authorities can be further involved in the UNCCD process both through routine governmental channels and newly created horizontal mechanisms. In both cases, it will take significant efforts to keep the level of information exchange with local communities high. For that purpose real understanding and interest has to be developed locally; practical and pragmatic approaches, for instance, small pilot projects on agricultural practices improvement, could serve as stimuli for generating interest among local people.

62. All reporting country Parties highly appreciate the catalytical support provided by international organizations and bilateral donors at the initial stage of the UNCCD process. At the same time, it is generally felt that only a considerable increase in financing, both internal and external, will allow these country Parties to maintain the momentum and/or to proceed more rapidly with the implementation of the Convention. In some cases acute shortage of funds as well as continuing overall economic difficulties might even force national authorities to change priorities in favour of pressing social needs and to the detriment of environmental protection, including the combat against land degradation/desertification. Hence, there is a need for further strengthening international cooperation and for combating desertification as well as for achieving synergy between all environmental programmes and conventions.

63. A trend towards elaborating new national financial mechanisms to finance environmental protection, including the combat against land degradation/desertification appears to deserve special attention. It applies particularly to a system of ecological taxes as well as to special national funds to be financed jointly by the central government, private sector and donors.

64. The initial experience with some transboundary ecological projects relevant to land conservation gives reason to believe that further support of subregional cooperation in the field of combating land degradation/desertification may prove to be cost effective, particularly between countries with common border and similar patterns of socio-economic development.

PART TWO: PROGRESS ACHIEVED IN THE ANNEX CONCERNING IMPLEMENTATION AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL FOR THE NORTHERN MEDITERRANEAN

65. In its decision 4/COP.3 concerning its programme of work (para. 1 (a) (iii)), the Conference of the Parties also decided to include in the agenda for its fourth session and, if necessary, its fifth session, the review of the report on progress made in the formulation and implementation of subregional and regional action programmes in regions other than Africa.

66. The affected northern Mediterranean country Parties are, at the time of preparation of this synthesis, Albania, Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Spain and Turkey. In 1995, a working group was established in Annex IV, which includes Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain and Turkey, with a rotating chairperson (currently Italy). The OECD countries in this group were then the only affected country Parties of the Annex for the northern Mediterranean. The countries of this group themselves decide on and finance their activities. As the group has since carried out activities of a regional nature, a regional report was prepared by the chair (Italy) in collaboration with the other partners in the group, and submitted for approval at the ministerial meeting held in Murcia, Spain, in June 2000. The Italian chairperson thereafter formally submitted the regional report of the Annex IV group to the CCD secretariat. The report follows its own format in view of the state of progress of the regional action programme, but it includes some elements of the format outlined in decision 11/COP.1. The report is annexed to this document and presents the main regional trends related to these countries concerning implementation of the Convention.

Annex

REPORT OF THE GROUP OF ANNEX IV COUNTRIES ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNCCD[2]

The present report has been prepared by the Italian National Committee in its function of presidency of annex IV. The report has been approved at the fifth Ministerial meeting held in Murcia, Spain, on 16 June 2000. The conclusions of the fifth Ministerial meeting of which this report is an integral part are available at the Internet site www.desertification.it.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

		Page
	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	24
1.	INTRODUCTION	25
2.	HISTORY OF NORTHERN MEDITERRANEAN ANNEX	27
2.1	PRELIMINARY ACTIVITIES BEFORE THE ENTERING IN FORCE OF THE CONVENTION	27
2.2	REGIONAL COORDINATION COMMITTEE OF THE ANNEX IV GROUP	28
2.3	STATE OF PROGRESS OF NATIONAL ACTION PROGRAMMES	29
	GREECE	29
	ITALY	30
	PORTUGAL	32
	SPAIN	33
	TURKEY	34
3.	REGIONAL MEETINGS	35
4.	REGIONAL ACTION PROGRAMME OF ANNEX IV	35
4.1	AIMS AND PURPOSES OF THE REGIONAL ACTION PROGRAMME	35
4.2	TERMS OF REFERENCE	36
4.3	INTERREGIONAL ACTIVITIES	38
5.	RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT	40

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[2] Reproduced in the original language in which it was received, without formal editing by the UNCCD secretariat.

TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)

Page

6. FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS OF ANNEX IV 42

BIBLIOGRAPHY 45

ATTACHMENT 1 - LIST OF MEMBERS OF THE COORDINATION COMMITTEE OF THE NORTHERN MEDITERRANEAN ANNEX 46

ATTACHMENT 2 - LIST OF FOCAL POINTS OF NORTHERN MEDITERRANEAN ANNEX 47

ATTACHMENT 3 - CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE "WORKSHOP DESERTIFICATION, CLIMATE CHANGE, BIODIVERSITY AND FOREST: SYNERGIES FOR AN INTER-REGIONAL AGENDA BETWEEN NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN MEDITERRANEAN COUNTRIES", ROMA, 18TH FEBRUARY 2000 49

ATTACHMENT 4 - CONCLUSIONS, PROPOSALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF NGOS ON THE PARTICIPATION OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN COMBATING DESERTIFICATION AND DROUGHT IN THE MEDITERRANEAN, MURCIA, 16-18 JUNE 2000 51

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Mediterranean basin is a region that has been inhabited for thousands of years by numerous cultures and civilizations. These have left an indelible mark on the environment and the landscape. In this region the recognition of the role of human action on desertification processes done by the UN Convention to Combat Drought and Desertification (UNCCD) has been a major step forward in selecting policies and measures. It is estimated that in the northern Mediterranean area land degradation affect 99.4 million ha, corresponding to 32% of the territory with arid, semi-arid and dry sub humid climate. This appraisal shows that land degradation has reached alarming levels in the northern Mediterranean region.

Within this framework Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain and Turkey have agreed to coordinate their action by creating a regional annex of the Northern Mediterranean which is the IV regional implementation Annex of the UNCCD.

National Programmes to combat drought and desertification have already been presented by Portugal and Italy, while Spain has presented related guidelines. Greece has published and distributed to the public its provisional action plan. Turkey is still drawing up its programme.

Annex activities are coordinated by an interministerial committee that has set in motion a permanent mechanism for consultations among northern Mediterranean countries on the subject of efforts to combat degradation and desertification.

The group of countries of the Northern Mediterranean annex countries have worked during the COPs and have been organised single-theme workshops to identify some priorities in preparation for the Regional Action Programme contemplated by the UNCCD. Priorities have been discussed, integrated and approved by National Committees and by the NGOs of the Northern Mediterranean region. The drawing up of a Regional Action Programme based on these priorities is a joint undertaking of countries that sets out to raise awareness of the phenomenon and involve as many social actors as possible in the implementation of the UNCCD as well as the General Directorates of the European Commission in desertification-related problems.

The uniqueness of this region has been acknowledged and emphasized by international treaties and agreements, such as the Barcelona Convention of 1976 and the Barcelona Declaration of 1995 underpinning the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. These agreements have been laying the foundations, through specific plans of action, for the creation of a context to promote trade/exchanges and the development of all countries in the region.

At an interregional level, Annex IV countries aim to coordinate their actions and create synergies between regional and sub-regional programmes and other international programmes such as the Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP), the Short and Medium Term Priority Environmental Action Programme (SMAP) and the Mediterranean Environmental Technical Assistance Programme (METAP) existing already in the area.

The international scientific community is actively involved in efforts to seek effective solutions to prevent and alleviate desertification-related problems in the Mediterranean area, through international organisations such as the UNEP, FAO and European Commission. EU

research & development programmes in particular provide the context in which scientific projects and collaboration are effected among northern Mediterranean countries. The main issues tackled have been the study of indicators, management of water, soil erosion, climate changes and traditional technologies.

Future developments for the Annex IV group will consider the extension to other affected country parties of the Northern Mediterranean region, continuing efforts to elaborate common projects on indicators, pilot areas, the sharing of information through a Clearing House Mechanism and the development of all possible synergies with other Convention and with North African countries.

1. INTRODUCTION

The northern Mediterranean region is a complex mosaic of diversified landscapes. It has been settled and cultivated for millennia by various cultures and civilizations. Much of the region is semi-arid and dry sub-humid and subject to seasonal droughts, high rainfall variability, or sudden intense downpours. It is also marked by high population densities, heavy concentrations of industry, and intensive agriculture in the coastal and flat areas. Less favoured areas are, on the other side, characterized by depopulation and abandonment of productive activities.

Mediterranean land degradation is often linked to poor agricultural practices. Soils become salinized, dry, sterile, unproductive and unprotected in response to a combination of natural hazards - droughts, floods, forest fires - and human-controlled activities - notably over-tilling irrational irrigation and overgrazing. Fertilizers, pesticides, irrigation, contamination by heavy metals, and the ecologically inappropriate introduction of exotic plant species is undermining the long-term health of the region's soils. Physical changes imposed on watercourses by the construction of reservoirs, the canalization of rivers, and the drainage of wetlands are affecting land quality. Meanwhile, groundwater levels are declining widely, resulting among other things in salt-water intrusion into coastal aquifers. Some 80% of the region's available freshwater is used for irrigation.

The continuing growth of industry, tourism, intensive agriculture, and other economic activities along the coastlines is placing particular stress on coastal areas and on water resources. On the other hand the abandonment of land, particularly on marginal and easily eroded hillsides, weakened agricultural planning and land management.

The situation has been aggravated by the social and economic crisis of less industrialized areas where, in recent years, under the pressure of globalisation of economy many productive activities lost their local markets contributing to the generation of migration fluxes from rural to urban areas.

In the northern Mediterranean countries the development of the desertification process is in direct relationship with the crisis of urban centres where the traditional arrangement of the landscape made up of natural houses built with a low consumption of resources has been cast aside in favour of a model based on the massive building, energy waste and environment pollution. The increase of urban centres, the increase of products demand and the consumer goods cause the abandonment of traditional farming systems and the introduction of new

methods and agricultural policies based on mono-cropping. The uprooting, the lost or the redefinition of elderly people or women's roles who own the knowledge entail the loss of management capabilities as for resources and traditional knowledge.

Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain and Turkey have taken an active role throughout the UNCCD definition process, starting from the UNCED conference in Rio on sustainable development in 1992. Relative national parliaments have since ratified the convention. While indeed the declared aim of the UNCCD is that of combating desertification and drought in Africa, since the phenomenon is becoming catastrophic in that continent, these countries of the northern Mediterranean believe that the principles and methodologies for combating desertification set forth in the convention should also be applied to their national territories to combat the phenomena of desertification and land degradation.

The text of the northern Mediterranean Annex became part of the Convention right from its signature in Paris in 1994. With the exception of Turkey the countries currently forming part of the northern Mediterranean Annex are members of the European Union.

Activities performed under the northern Mediterranean Annex also receive the active support of "observer" that are parties to the UNCCD but are not affected, such as France, the Principality of Monaco and the European Community. It is to be stressed that the role of the European Community is of strategic importance for the implementation of policies and measures to combat desertification in the Mediterranean area. The policies and programmes of the European Union are indeed one of the principal driving forces behind the development and protection of the environment in areas of the northern Mediterranean affected by desertification phenomena.

Another geo-political aspect of the utmost importance for the group of Annex IV countries is the combined presence in the Mediterranean area of countries from the Balkan area of Europe as well as of North African and Eastern Mediterranean countries belonging to the respective African and Asian Annexes of the UNCCD.

For the implementation of the UNCCD in the Mediterranean area and creation of synergies, it should be recalled that all countries looking onto the Mediterranean Sea adhered to the Barcelona Convention (1976) whose Mediterranean Action Plan is the basic instrument of regional collaboration in the environmental sphere in the Mediterranean region.

In this field must be remembered that the Parties of the Barcelona Convention have appointed the "Mediterranean Commission for the Sustainable Development" which have among its priorities issues the fight to desertification.

The "Clean Development Mechanism" of the framework Convention on Climatic Changes may also provide considerable opportunities for regional collaboration, combining the aim of reducing "greenhouse" emissions with that of combating land degradation and desertification.

It should also be remembered that the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership Process between countries in the EU and twelve countries in the south and east of the Mediterranean region, was

embarked upon from the Barcelona Declaration adopted during the Barcelona Conference in 1995. The objectives of the agreement are peace, stability, security, growth and sustainable development with the perspective of the construction of a Euro-Mediterranean free trade area starting in 2010, and placed the environment and sustainable development among the priority issues of bilateral and multilateral programmes, in particular the "Short and Medium Term Priority Environmental Action Programme" (SMAP).

The MEDA programme of the European Union, is the financial instrument to implement to the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership.

Finally, must be mentioned the "Mediterranean Environmental Technical Assistance Programme" (METAP) promoted by European Investment Bank (EIB), EC, World Bank, UNDP, to promote technical support to (so far 13) Mediterranean and facilitate investment in this fiend. METAP activities are directed toward three priority issues for the region: integrated management of coastal and water resources; prevention of pollution in "hot spots"; promotion of institutional consolidation, participation and partnership.

This report was prepared by the Italian presidency on the behalf of the members of the group of Annex IV for the fourth session of the Conference of the Parties.

2. HISTORY OF NORTHERN MEDITERRANEAN ANNEX

2.1 PRELIMINARY ACTIVITIES BEFORE THE ENTERING IN FORCE OF THE CONVENTION

During the course of the 6th Interim Conference of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INCD), held in New York in January 1995, the need was stated for proceeding to draw up the national and regional programmes on combating desertification, for the purpose of facilitating the rapid implementation of the Convention as soon as it enters into force. Spain chaired the works of the group in the years 1995 and 1996 before the entering in force of the Convention.

Pursuing this line, a Regional Conference on Desertification for the northern Mediterranean Region was held in Almeria, in June 1995, and one of its conclusions was the agreement to set up a regional reflection group to prepare guidelines for a Regional Action Programme (RAP). This agreement has been reported in INCD 7 Nairobi, August 1995, and INCD 8 Geneva, February 1996.

With these premises, the first session of the Reflection Group was held in Madrid in July 1995, hosted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Spain on his quality of Chairman of the Group, with attendance of representatives of France, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Turkey, the European Union and the Interim Secretariat of the CCD.

2.2 REGIONAL COORDINATION COMMITTEE OF THE ANNEX IV GROUP

After the convention came into force, in 1997 a coordination committee was formed, made up of reporting members responsible for the implementation of the UNCCD at a national level.

The UNCCD provided the opportunity to create a regional workgroup among affected country parties of the northern Mediterranean that could deal jointly with desertification issues within the UNCCD, the OECD and the EU since until the convention came into force no inter-State consultation structures existed. This coordination initiative involving affected country parties of Northern Mediterranean Annex (Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain and Turkey) has been chaired until now, on a rotational basis, by Portugal in the years 1997 and 1998 and by Italy in 1999 and 2000.

The coordination committee is made up of ministers from the countries of the Annex IV group (see attachment 1). European Commission and French representatives have taken part in meetings as observers.

The coordination committee has so far met five times during the Conferences of the Parties, as well as during inter-session periods:

- Dakar, Senegal, 8th November 1998, during the works of the second COP
- Lisbon, Portugal, 17th June 1999 for the presentation of the Portuguese NAP,
- Recife, Brasil, 22nd November 1999, during the works of the third COP
- Rome, Italy, 17th February 2000 for the presentation of the Italian NAP
- Murcia, Spain, 16th June 2000 for the presentation of the Spanish guidelines of the NAP.

During these meetings debate has centred on topics concerning the drafting of the Regional Action Programme and the implementation of decisions taken during the Party Conferences, and initiatives to be undertaken jointly have been assessed.

Annex IV countries, during the fourth ministerial meeting held in Rome, on 17 February 2000, agreed to finance a Mediterranean unit of the UNCCD secretariat, to invite Monaco to join the group as observer, and to open the meetings of Annex IV to the participation of representatives of NGOs.

During the fifth ministerial meeting held in Murcia on 16th June 2000, they approved the "Report of the group of the Annex IV countries on the implementation of the UNCCD" and gave mandate to the focal points to prepare the RAP on the agreed basis of the "Terms of Reference". They also agreed to meet again in Bonn during the COP IV and to consider among others the following issues:

- establishing the rules for the access to the Group of Annex IV Countries;
- possible admission, to join as observers to the Group, of countries belonging to the Mediterranean Basin and in particular some of them who launched on 20 May 2000 in Ancona the "Adriatic and Ionian Initiative (AII);
- proposal of the next Presidency of the Group;
- establishing the rules of rotation of the Presidency;
- Inter-Regional Mediterranean Action Programme;
- further implementing participation of the NGO's.

The ministerial coordination group is supported by a workgroup of technical experts and national "focal points" (see attachment 2). The technical group has met on a number of occasions to compare the progress being made by respective National Programmes. These meetings centred on the possibility of synergies between National Programmes and on a joint Regional Action Programme for the group of Annex IV. The technical workgroup submits proposals and documents for the approval of the coordination committee. One of its main tasks is to coordinate preparatory activities for the Regional Action Programme.

2.3 STATE OF PROGRESS OF NATIONAL ACTION PROGRAMMES

All countries of the group of Annex IV have worked to define their respective National Action Programmes. Portugal was the first country to approve the NAP, passed by the government in June 1999.

Italy's NAP was approved by the Italian government on 21 December 1999, and is now being implemented by the competent ministries and administrations.

The progress made in drawing up and implementing National Action Programmes in countries in the group is as follows:

GREECE

The Greek National Committee for Combating Desertification was established by the ministerial decisions of the Ministry of Agriculture. Its members include authorized officials of the Ministers of Agriculture, Environment, Public Works, Development, Economy, Foreign Affairs, delegates from Universities, Research Institutes and NGOs.

The Committee has prepared, on the basis of documents and suggestions submitted by four working groups of experts, the Provisional National Action Plan (PnP) . The plan has been distributed to concerned public and private organizations and the media. It also has been presented at municipal meetings. The PnP consists of the following chapters:

Definitions, principles and objectives
Desertification processes in Greece
General measures on desertification prevention and mitigation
Measures for the agricultural sector
Measures for the Forest sector
Measures for the protection of fauna

Measures for the sector of animal husbandry
Measures for the sector of water resources
Measures for the socio-economic sector

The Committee has prepared and submitted to the UNCCD secretariat the National Report on the implementation of the Convention. It also published a report on drought and its mitigation in Greece.

The basic conclusions reached by the preliminary work can be summarised as follows:

1. Desertification is a real threat over a large sections of the Central and southern eastern mainland, the Aegean islands and Crete.

2. Areas under various degree of desertification threat occupy approximately 1/3 of the country.

3. Mitigation efforts so far have been insufficient. Public awareness is at low level. There is an urgent need for serious legal and institutional changes.

4. There are erious knowledge gaps concerning factors, processes and mitigation of desertification.

ITALY

In September 1997, the Italian President of the Council has instituted the National Committee to combat drought and desertification. The Committee has been working on the implementation and the dissemination of information aimed at combating desertification in Italy. Its most important activity has been the involvement of different institutions and the organizations to coordinate initiatives to combat drought and land degradation taking in account the social, economic, energetic, environmental and cultural aspects.

Policy initiatives undertaken by the National Committee brought positive results like a new strategy of cooperation, the promotion of new rules for soil protection and the law on water resources protection recently been approved by the Parliament.

Governmental and non-governmental organization, scientific organization, local communities and the are working together to define and implement common plans, in particular, in the following fields:

- management of natural resources, soil and water;
- coastal areas protection;
- improvement of compatible agriculture and zoo technique;
- sustainable tourism;
- environmental education and sustainable use of the resources;
- promotion of innovative technologies and unemployment support.

The National Committee prepared the "First national communication to combat desertification" submitted and approved by the Inter-Ministerial Committee for the Economic Planning (CIPE) - deliberation n.154/98 -, the National Committee has approved the "Guidelines for the National Plan" and finally the CIPE has approved the "National Action Programme to combat drought and desertification in Italy" - deliberation 229/99.

The Italian NAP is broken down into:

- National level;
- Regional and river basin programmes;
- Cooperation.

National level

The plan foresees that the Ministry of Treasury, the Ministry of Environment, the Ministry of Industry, the Ministry of Public Works, the Ministry for Agricultural and Forest Policies, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Foreign Trade locate the financial resources referred to:

- soil protection;
- sustainable management of water resource;
- impact reduction of the productive activities;
- territorial re-balance;
- information, training and research.

The information, training and research programme to combat drought and desertification is under development. The plan is in deep involvement with the "National Research Plan for the protection of Climate".

ITALIAN REGIONS AND RIVER BASIN AUTHORITY PROGRAMMES

The Italian Regions play a fundamental role in the implementation of the NAP, since control of the territory, planning and actions are performed locally and not centrally. Administrative decentralization has rendered it necessary to fully involve regional authorities in the selection of objectives, priorities and means to combat desertification.

The NAP requires Italian Regions and River Basin Authorities to identify in their territory the areas at risk of desertification and to indicate the measures that have been or are to be enacted to combat the phenomena identified. In the current phase of political ad administrative decentralization, the national Committee has the task of coordinating, standardizing and integrating Italian regional programmes, making the national government aware of aspects requiring national legislative action or actions within the context of the European Union.

Cooperation

The definition of cooperation objectives and strategies with developing countries is an integral part of the Italian NAP. Actions to combat desertification will be one of the priorities of Italian cooperation, which is aimed at working with the countries affected, in conjunction with other donor countries, to provided the technical and financial support required to implement the NAP. The National Committee and the Foreign Affairs Ministry have constituted a panel to plan the strategies and the actions of the Italian Co-operation to combat drought and desertification in the developing Countries including those that are connected to Italian initiative toward debt reduction.

PORTUGAL

1 - The State of NAP

The National Action Programme to Combat Desertification was approved in 1998, June 17 and is the result of a widespread participation by agents involved and interested in the issue of desertification, mainly from the most affected regions, in strict compliance with the spirit of the Convention to Combat Desertification.

We are now ready to begin the implementation of the NAP, as the key requirements were already satisfied:

- Campaigns to raise public awareness on the issue of desertification;
- Creation of conditions for a strong participation of public and private entities;
- Integrated interdepartmental and multi-disciplinary co-operation, from the drafting of policies up to the preparation of the implementation of specific actions;
- Creation of a National Committee to Co-ordinate the NAP and to monitor its implementation;
- Creation of a National Desertification Observatory, working closely with the National Committee, that will make possible the monitoring and the assessment of the programme's implementation.

2 - Elaboration of the NAP

A National Coordination Group was created in December 1996 to elaborate the NAP, presided by the Focal Point, including experts from 8 Ministries, several institutions of the civil service, some of the central departments and others from regional services, in a total of about 30 people. This Group was responsible for the preparation of a synthesis document on "Causes and consequences of desertification in Portugal", which was prepared to give to the public a scientific and technical background for discussion. The public working sessions were held at the regional level with the participation of the media, universities, environmental NGOs, experts from official departments, teachers from several education levels and individuals concerned with the problem.

A Scientific Council was also created to support the National Coordination Group. This Group was composed of 12 experts covering areas such as Climate, soil, water, rural development, economy and sociology.

SPAIN

In the framework of the procedure for the elaboration of the NAP the first step was the presentation to the National Advisory Council for the Environment (Consultant body in which all the sectors of the society are represented) of a document of principles by the Ministry of Environment. This document of NAP principles was favourably informed by the Council. Immediately a working group for the NAP draft preparation was constituted under the co-ordination of the Ministry of Environment. This is a scientific and technical group and is composed by representatives of the different sectors of the Administration which are competent in aspects of the desertification. The NAP Draft has been already elaborated and is ready for its submission to the Spanish society for a general process of discussion.

As a previous step to the discussion, amendment and approval of the draft NAP a document of Guidelines of the National Action Programme against Desertification has been prepared and its approval is expected by June 2000.

The consultative process is envisaged and structured based in the organisation of a set of sector working groups. These groups of discussion will be formed by the representatives of the administration and the civil society. After the consultative process in these groups the definitive document will be submitted to the Government for its approval.

According to the Draft NAP a National Committee will be instituted with the task of co-ordinate and supervise the application of he NAP. This National Committee is in the process of constitution and includes representatives of all the sectors related to desertification in the civil society and the administration.

The Draft NAP presents the assessment of the status of the desertification in the country and the proposals for a national policy against desertification. These proposals are: the determination and delimitation of the areas for action, the coordination of related sector policies and the identification and development of set of specific actions against desertification.

The determination of the areas for action is aimed to the delimitation of the physical spaces and the socio-economic environments in which the policy against desertification is going to be developed. Such determination is reached by the application to the territory of indicators on every of the elements that the CCD points out in the Annex IV as features that characterizes the desertification in the Mediterranean.

The policy coordination is the key issue of the Spanish NAP. Because the desertification is a multi-sectorial and multi-disciplinary topic it requires integrated solutions. So the policy coordination is necessary in the formulation of such integrated solutions which are linked to the interests harmonization. That implies the resolution of interest conflicts that are active in the territory.

The NAP of Spain cannot be conceived but as a part of the environmental and socio-economic national planning. Most, if not all, of the fields for action which integrate the combat to desertification are the subject of sector policies developed by diverse branches of the Administration and represent areas of activity for different sectors of the civil society. In this context as an starting point, the NAP Draft includes a preliminary identification of actions to develop as part of an integrated strategy to combat desertification. These actions are structured in objectives which are consistent with the priority action areas formulated in the article 6 of Annex IV of CCD. This set of actions is aimed to serve as a basis for discussion during the negotiating process of the NAP. The analysis of the set of actions, the incorporation of new and the assessment of their feasibility is expected as an output of the process of discussion.

TURKEY

The United National Convention to Combat Desertification was signed in 1994 in Paris by Minister of Environment on behalf of Turkish Government, and it was ratified on 11 February 1998 by Turkish Grand National Assembly.

Process of implementation of UNCCD in Turkey has covered wide range of activities since it has been ratified. Immediately after becoming party to the Convention, "National Awareness Seminar" was held in Izmir on 20-22 May 1998 with participation from governmental and non-governmental organizations and scientists from universities and research institutions. The aim of this seminar was to inform all the participants about the implementation of the Convention and to raise a public awareness about combating desertification all levels.

In recent years, Turkey have put intensive efforts to develop a National Action Programme with inclusion of information taken from the related governmental and non-governmental organizations, institutions and universities. A meeting was held in Bolu-Golkoy from 8 to 9 July 1999 in order to draft a National Action Programme. The participants from relevant ministries, institutions, universities and NGOs attended the meeting and discussed specific problems relevant to desertification in view of the affected areas and communities, and a need to develop an effective and integrated soil-water management approach to combat desertification at the local and national levels was clearly addressed. As a result of the two-day meeting, an outline for National Action Program to Combat Desertification and Drought in TURKEY was formulated.

In accordance with the context of the Convention, National Coordination Body (NCB) has been established in May 2000. The body is aimed to promote and coordinate required actions for the implementation of the UNCCD in Turkey. NCB initially identified priority issues as preparation of a regulation to implement the Convention and finalization of the NAP.

Besides the contributions from various government, agencies and organizations, another input for the preparation and the implementation of the NAP is an UNDP umbrella project. The project aims to provide institutional framework and coordination with the Government of Turkey for the integration of environmental concerns in development policies programmes plans in two cross-sectoral areas: sustainable energy & atmospheric protection and combating desertification which are the two of the priority action areas identified in Turkey's National Environmental Action Plan. The project found appropriate by all central government agencies. The project is

expected to be officially approved and become operational soon. The project will supply support for the preparation of the NAP and pilot projects for the application of the NAP. Participation will be provided on implementation of the pilot projects by all the relevant actors, namely governmental and non-governmental organizations, universities and local communities during the preparation of the NAP.

3. REGIONAL MEETINGS

Regional Activities in the Northern Mediterranean Annex have so far been chaired by Spain (1995-1996), Portugal (1997-1998) and Italy (1999-2000) on a rotation basis. Forthcoming presidencies will be entrusted to Greece and Turkey.

The most significant initiatives undertaken by countries in the northern Mediterranean area to raise awareness, create new initiatives and disseminate information about desertification issues have been:

- Oeiras, April 1997 -Regional Reflection Group Meeting
- Athens, May 1998 - Meeting of National Committees of Annex IV
- Cordoba, September 1998 - Indicators to asses desertification in the Mediterranean
- Porto Torres, September 1998 - International on indicators on desertification
- Rome, September 1999 - Experts Meeting on the preparation of the RAP of Annex IV
- Rome, February 2000 - Workshop "Social participation to combat desertification"

In addition to these initiatives in which all countries were involved, national events have been staged, and to mark the world day against desertification held on 17 June public events and meetings with the press and citizens were organized.

In particular the workshop held in Rome in February 2000 in view of the importance of social participation within the UNCCD, promoted and staged a meeting between focal points and national reporting members on the European methodology for participation, information and involvement, the "European Awareness Scenario Workshop - EASW" aimed to include effective participation actions in the respective NAPs and in the RAP.

4. REGIONAL ACTION PROGRAMME OF ANNEX IV

4.1 AIMS AND PURPOSES OF THE REGIONAL ACTION PROGRAMME (RAP)

The RAP aims to:

- promote the acceptance and the compliance of values and principles for the preservation of environment and soil, water and biotic resources and the awareness that desertification can, in many cases, be stopped and reversed by means of proper policies and interventions.

- harmonize national action programmes of Country members of the Annex IV and to improve their co-ordination in combating desertification, including under other relevant UN Conventions.
- set up a network that will help regional and local authorities affected by specific problems to establish international partnerships for prevention or mitigation projects eligible for funding by the European Commission.

Assessment of the future implementation of the RAP might also enrich the EC environmental and structural policies in the Mediterranean, as well as identify other appropriate public and private investments in the region to combat drought and desertification.

4.2 TERMS OF REFERENCE

Following on from preparatory work performed by the "group of reflection", in September 1999 the focal points of Annex IV countries drew up draft "Terms of reference" for the Northern Mediterranean regional action programme of the Annex IV group, pinpointing common elements and defining possible objectives. The workgroup also identified action priorities and a work methodology. This document was supplemented by recommendations and by the identification of steps required to complete the Terms of Reference and pass on to the drawing up of the RAP. A first control was undertaken by submitting the document to ministers and to respective national committees for their perusal to verify the coherence of proposed actions with national policies on desertification and to gather together any amendments and additions. A second step was the presentation of the draft "Terms of Reference" to the non-government organisations of northern Mediterranean countries. Discussions with NGOs were held in Malta on 29 and 30 April during the International Workshop "Beyond Globalization to Local Regeneration" and in Murcia, Spain, on 17 and 18 June 2000 during the Mediterranean conference" The participation of NGOs in the National Action Programmes to Combat Desertification and Drought - Soil use and sustainable development in the Mediterranean". Observations and comments were used to modify the initial document and finalize it.

The priorities included thus far in the Terms of Reference do not indicate in this phase the projects and actions selected to combat desertification. These are contained in the National Action Programmes. Priorities refer mainly to the creation of a working method that lays the foundations and provides the cognitive elements required to implement the UNCCD at a Regional level.

The priorities identified so far for the drawing up of the RAP relate to:

1. The areas most at risk of desertification;
2. Common indicators for assessing desertification processes;
3. Collection and analysis of technical and scientific data;
4. Exchange of data and information;
5. Involvement of civil society as a whole in the RAP decision-making process;
6. Traditional knowledge and practices for protecting the quality of the Mediterranean landscape.
7. Coordination and links with existing regional and sub-regional initiatives.

The actual preparation of the RAP, which will build on the aforementioned topics, is a considerable undertaking in terms of human and financial resources and the involvement of national institutions and the European Union.

In greater detail:

The topic "areas most at risk of desertification" assumes a common methodology for countries in the northern Mediterranean area to identify the areas most at risk of desertification and territorial degradation. One way of making this priority action operational in order to implement the UNCCD in northern Mediterranean countries could be to fully involve the DGs of the European Commission concerned with the problems of land degradation and desertification of the territory. An important example from the past was the "Habitat" directive issued by the European Commission to implement the UN convention for the protection of bio-diversity. The Community directive is a standard and essential instrument for identifying objectives, methods and resources.

The topic "Common indicators for assessing desertification processes" meets the need to identify indicators, and methodologies for assessing the extent of ongoing phenomena and relative trends. Indicators are the result of a measurement and observation process to obtain information that is consistent, coherent and acceptable for different types of users.

A lot of work has already been performed within the framework of scientific projects or plans drawn up by national organisations and agencies on this issue. Actual pilot studies need to be conducted to identify and quantify, first on a small scale and then on national and regional scales, indicators to be used to assess the state of desertification and progress made following actions to combat desertification.

The topic "Collection and analysis of technical and scientific data" meets the need to intensify scientific activity and make available to the scientific community the results obtained from research and monitoring projects. The result dissemination phase will have to be included among the tasks of each scientific project. The availability of online computer networks now makes it possible to share data and information, but this policy must become a specific priority for those countries intending to jointly combat degradation and desertification.

"The Involvement of civil society as a whole in the RAP decision-making process" meets the need to involve sectors of society not only through information and consultation actions but also through effective participation. The involvement of NGOs, the productive sector and administrators is vital for raising awareness and performing at a local level practical measures necessary to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought.

The topic "Traditional knowledge and practices for protecting the quality of the Mediterranean landscape" requires the creation of new initiatives to protect and repossess the wealth of knowledge that for thousands of years has guaranteed the sustainability of the use of natural resources. Mediterranean countries possess an important common wealth of traditional and local knowledge that is in danger of disappearing, squeezed out by an idea of modernization

that fails to take into due account aspects pertaining to the sustainability of development. New initiatives to combat desertification may benefit enormously from the combination of traditional knowledge and modern technologies.

Coordination actions and links with existing initiatives at regional and sub-regional levels set out to coordinate activities carried out in conjunction with other thematic areas, such as the Barcelona convention, the convention on climatic changes. Agenda MED 21/MCSD, EEA/Initiatives, and to intensify cooperation and partnerships in the Mediterranean area between different UNCCD annexes.

The RAP is now being drawn up. Joint initiatives undertaken by countries in the northern Mediterranean area have thus far centred on the preparation of the Programme. The intense schedule of meetings has raised the overall degree of awareness of the problems to be faced, and a partnership is gradually being forged among northern Mediterranean countries. The joint strategy pursued so far has been that of opening up all possible channels of funding and of national and international actions in place but thus far little used for the purpose of combating desertification. Many EU programmes may already have significant applications for actions to combat desertification. One of the aims of the RAP is that of raising the priority of these issues in the agendas of national States and the EU.

4.3 INTERREGIONAL ACTIVITIES

In identifying objectives and activities of the RAP it will be taken in mind the unique characteristics of the Mediterranean basin that is a bio-geographic area involving countries belonging to three different annexes of UNCCD. Therefore the RAP is open to possible coordination with the Regional or Sub-regional Action Programmes promoted by member countries of other Annexes.

The relations with Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries had been governed until five years ago by bilateral agreements. These agreements are now being progressively replaced by Association Agreements within the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP), which was agreed upon in July 1995. The MEDA Fund is the main financial instrument of this Partnership. The Association Agreements have components on environmental protection enabling the funding of programmes that are aimed particularly at the establishment of administrative capacity in the conservation or restoration of important habitats hosting endangered flora and fauna as well as pilot actions to promote sustainable development.

The SMAP, within the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) offers opportunities for joint action in the Mediterranean. In fact, SMAP is the environmental component of the EMP. The SMAP is a major tool for our contribution to combating the desertification in the Mediterranean region.

The SMAP is a framework programme for the Mediterranean environment, providing orientation for policy and funding, aiming at ensuring synergies with other existing programmes and instruments. This Programme was adopted by the Helsinki Ministerial Conference

(Nov. 1997) of the European Union and it encompasses - among its 5 priority fields - measures to combat desertification. The major - yet, not unique - Community financial instrument for the implementation of SMAP is the MEDA Programme.

The implementation is ensured through pilot or demonstration projects and programmes, at national or regional levels, and it relies on the initiative of the 27 Euro-Med Partners. Supportive measures - such as capacity building, training, networks, EIA, etc. - have been foreseen to assist the 12 non-EC Partners and to create a clear link with the long-term.

The SMAP recognises the fact that desertification is a major problem in the Mediterranean needing appropriate and combined measures. Other priorities, relevant in several cases to the operational projects aiming at combating desertification within SMAP are integrated water management, integrated coastal zone management and protection of vulnerable biodiversity.

The main interregional initiatives promoted by Annex IV countries have thus far been undertaken to improve relations with countries on the southern shores of the Mediterranean. For political, social, economic and environmental reasons these countries are the first interlocutors contacted by the Annex IV group. The initiatives undertaken so far have been:

- Crete, October 1996 - International Conference, Mediterranean Desertification Research results and policy implications.
- Murcia, May 1997 - Workshop about the Annex IV of Regional Implementation for the northern Mediterranean.
- Matera, July 1997 - First Forum on European policies to combat desertification
- Marrakech, October 1998 Desertification Information System for planning needs in the Mediterranean Region.
- Matera, October 1998 - Second International Forum on European policies to combat desertification.
- Rome, February 2000 - Workshop "Desertification, Climate Change, Biodiversity and Forest: Synergies for an inter- regional agenda between northern and Southern Mediterranean countries."(see conclusions of the workshop in Attachment 3)
- Murcia, June 2000 - Conference "The Participation of Mediterranean NGOs in national programmes to combat desertification and drought" (see conclusions in Attachment 4)

The Crete Conference, attended by representatives of 20 countries, showed the results of studies and research conducted through research and development programmes promoted by the European Commission. The Proceedings have been published in 1999 (see bibliography).

The Murcia workshop in 1997, with the participation of delegations of annex VI countries and of numerous delegations from countries in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean.

The Matera forums in 1997 and 1998 dealt with the subject of using traditional technologies to combat desertification and were an opportunity for North African and annex IV countries to share experiences (see bibliography for proceedings references).

The Marrakech workshop for the creation of an information system entailing the participation in the "Desertification Information System for planning needs in the Mediterranean Region" of Annex IV countries, countries in the Arab Maghreb Union and Egypt. The initiative was approved and funded by the General Directorate for Development Cooperation of the Italian Foreign Affairs Ministry and received the support of the European Environment Agency.

The Murcia Conference organized by MED Forum, the Mediterranean NGO Network for Ecology and sustainable Development (102 NGOs from 23 Mediterranean countries), had 201 participants representing Mediterranean NGOs, experts, academics, farmers, stock-keepers, local, regional and national authorities and international organizations and recommended in its conclusions "to make progress in the implementation of an Inter-Regional Mediterranean Action Programme, drawn up and applied in collaboration with other regions or subregions' programmes, on the basis of a spirit of international solidarity and association, with a view to improving co-operation and co-ordination at sub-regional, regional and international level, to channel financial, human, organizational and technical resources where they are most needed, by means of a "Mediterranean regional initiative to combat desertification".

5. RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Assessments of the intensity and extent of desertification conducted by FAO/UNEP/UNESCO at a global level show that in areas of the northern Mediterranean climatically at risk there are signs of land degradation covering 99.4 million ha, corresponding to 32% of the entire surface area exposed to the risk of desertification.

This large-scale appraisal shows that the northern Mediterranean area has a higher percentage of degraded territory compared with other continents (although surface areas affected in Asia, Africa and America are larger in absolute terms). As the study did not specify to what extent the degradation revealed was due to natural causes, the action of man or their combined effect, the European scientific community has undertaken numerous studies on desertification.

Within its research and development Programme, the European Commission has promoted and funded studies and researches on the subject of desertification in the Mediterranean area (project MEDALUS, ARIDUSEUROMED). These completed researches have produced a large amount of results and information, presented in a major conference held in Crete in Greece and in numerous scientific publications (Mairota 1997, Thornes 1997).

Europe's scientific community has focused its attention on the study of desertification processes and on the drawing up of evaluation methodologies in terms of hydrographical basin.

At a national level, a useful reference in terms of methodology is the appraisal carried out for Portugal .

SOIL

A number of research institutes have studied soil trends and conducted research and development projects at a national level, producing studies and specialist maps on various scales. Topics of interest to countries in the northern Mediterranean area have been tackled within the

framework of the European Commission, the European Environment Agency and the European Soil Bureau (ESB) of the Ispra JRC. The ESB in particular has carried out evaluations on the extent of soil erosion and on the content of organic substance, enabling initial comparisons to be made among European countries.

The studies and appraisals effected so far are preliminary in nature, but they have shown that there is a shortage of data on soil features, especially soil depth, stone volume and surface texture, as well as the content of organic substance.

The study showed that the Mediterranean region was particularly exposed to erosion, and that in some areas the phenomenon had become irreversible, with soil having disappeared completely.

To correct the lack of reliable data on soil carbon in Southern Europe, the European Soil Bureau has been developing, in collaboration with the Member States, a soil profile analytical database containing data that can be related to the European Soil Geographical Database at 1,000,000 scale.

WATER RESOURCES

The study 'Towards a Sustainable Strategic Management of Water Resources. Evaluation of Present Policies and Orientations for the Future' (to be published), was jointly carried out by the European Commission's General Directorate XVI (Regional policy and Cohesion) and the Institute For Prospective Technological Studies (IPTS) of the EC's Joint Research Centre.

The project focused upon essential aspects of sustainable water management, considering water as an economic good, both in its own right and as a required input for many regional development activities.

The project included an initial diagnosis phase in which the relevant data on water supply, demand and institutional and financial management were assembled for seven Mediterranean countries - Portugal, Spain, France, Italy, Greece, Cyprus and Malta. The data concerned the present (reference year: 1990) and extrapolated future trends, up to the year 2015. On the basis of these data, different parameters linked to the management of water quantity and quality, the demand for water in each of its uses, were assessed, with the goal of identifying possible strategies for reducing overall consumption through either increased efficiency or adaptation of activities to the hydrological and stochastic constraints.

CLIMATE, DROUGHT AND ARIDITY

The typically Mediterranean climatic conditions are characterized by extended periods of dry spells and wet periods with a regime of irregular precipitation, with flash flood, associated with low probabilities of occurrence.

In Mediterranean countries the drought phenomenon can no longer be viewed as an exceptional event but rather a natural phenomenon tied up with the climate and the management

of water resources. Agrometeorological services and numerous research centres in northern Mediterranean countries produce studies and national and regional reports on the drought phenomenon, but aridity and drought appraisals have not yet been produced at a regional level.

Drought can have an impact on many sectors of economy and of environment. In Italy, the 1989-1991 drought reduced the flow of some rivers. If the drought were to continue, the ecological quality of the rivers could be greatly influenced. Also, the extraordinary low level of precipitation in the 90s' in Spain had consequences on the decrease of run-off, of more than 60% in the Tajo, Guadiana, Guadaquivir, Southeast river basins and Canary islands, and a significant reduction in the storage average regulation capacity of reservoirs. This extreme situation had also an adverse effect on aquatic ecosystems and landscape in a lot of regions, i.e. dry rivers, deterioration of rivers quality, impact on ecosystems, turning into not only a water shortage problem, but into a large environmental problem.

The above-mentioned study "Towards a Sustainable Strategic Management of Water Resources: Evaluation of Present Policies and Orientations for the Future" deals with the topic of drought and stresses the need to raise the level of awareness of the availability of water resources and to create information-producing databases.

TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE

The creation of a network is proposed, whose purpose is to gather, evaluate and disseminate information about traditional knowledge and practices for safeguarding the quality of the Regional landscape.

The existing Center for Studies of Traditional Knowledge, located in Matera, Italy, has been operating in this field for the UNCCD Secretariat, with international organizations such as UNEP, FAO, UNESCO, etc., and is connected with the most important world centers for traditional knowledge studies. A prototype of an archive has been prepared with the purpose of classifying and evaluating traditional knowledge.

The archive contains graphic and photographic documentation, socio-economical evaluation and environmental context parameters, application criteria, and proposals of suitable modern techniques with the description of the advantages and disadvantages that can be individuated, the limits in applying and spreading the traditional practices, and the possible innovative proposals.

6. FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS OF ANNEX IV

The present group of countries of Annex IV doesn't include all countries of the Northern Mediterranean Region, France and the Principality of Monaco are currently participating as observers, giving an important contributions in terms of skills and experience in efforts to combat desertification. Albania, Cyprus, Malta and San Marino already ratified the Convention but other affected countries of the Northern Mediterranean region are no party jet. Efforts to combat desertification in all Northern Mediterranean Region will become more effective if all concerned parties cooperate together.

Undertakings on indicators

The topic of indicators has been a constant concern of the group of Annex IV countries in order to establish a common frame of reference both nationally and regionally that complies with some basic requirements. Desertification indicators:

(a) must be based on sound scientific truths;

(b) must represent a fundamental aspect of the issue under review;

(c) must be limited in number and be representative of the system;

(d) must conform to a minimum set of standardized indicators in relation to actions performed locally;

(e) must be chosen bearing in mind the criterion of data gathering and processing costs;

(f) must be easy to measure and to express numerically.

Coordination of projects

The process to prepare the RAP is under way. Annex partners will have to work intensely to implement the guidelines that have been established and to pass on to the execution of coordinated pilot and demonstrative actions.

In the framework of EU program Interreg III, the project "Transbundary network of multifunctional Laboratories" actually involves administrative regions of Italy, France and Spain. The regions agreed to cooperate to establish a network to exchange data, information and experiences about monitoring, management and assessment of the environment including desertification processes in the northern Mediterranean.

Information sharing

Information systems and clearing houses represent a basic stepping stone for the definition of common strategies and technical and scientific co-operation. The building up of a Clearing House is conceived to create informatics facilities for the storage and open exchange of information for mutual benefit.

Synergies with other conventions and with other Annexes

The workshop "Desertification, Climate Change, Biodiversity and Forest. Synergies for an inter-regional agenda between northern and southern Mediterranean countries" held in Rome, Italy, on February 2000, marked the start of discussions and exchanges between representatives of countries in the Mediterranean area responsible for Global Conventions. These countries are committed to improve collaboration ties and to undertaking new initiatives valorizing elements

common to global conventions. Annex IV is open to cooperation with other neighbouring annexes. Synergies with other annexes could be further implemented within the frame of an Inter-Regional Mediterranean Action Programme.

As proposed by MED-forum during the ministerial Meeting in Murcia this programme should be "drawn up and applied in collaboration with other regions or sub-regions' programmes, on the basis of a spirit of international solidarity and association, with a view to improving co-operation and co-ordination at sub-regional, regional and international level, to channel financial, human, organizational and technical resources where they are most needed, by means of a "Mediterranean regional initiative to combat desertification".

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Attachment 3

WORKSHOP

DESERTIFICATION, CLIMATE CHANGE, BIODIVERSITY AND FOREST: SYNERGIES FOR AN INTER-REGIONAL AGENDA BETWEEN NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN MEDITERRANEAN COUNTRIES

ROMA, 18TH FEBRUARY 2000
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

On the kind invitation of the Italian Government as President of the UNCCD Annex IV, UNCCD focal points and other representatives from Northern and Southern Mediterranean Countries met in Rome at the premises of FAO on 18th February 2000, together with representatives of International Organisations and NGOs , to discuss possible ways to ensure synergies among the Conventions on Desertification, Biodiversity and Climate Change and the Forest Principles.

Participants exchanged their experiences and views on the issue and stressed the need to continue contacts among countries of Annex IV and the Mediterranean countries of Annex I of the CCD.

Participants expressed their willingness to explore appropriate ways and means to integrate the objectives of the other Conventions when implementing the CCD. They re-affirmed the need to mainstream their national strategies towards sustainable development.

The main points raised were as follows:

1. Improvement of exchange of information on the topics relevant to the Rio Conventions and Forest Principles among countries and within their administrations.
2. Linking scientific knowledge with policy making, in view of increasing efficiency.
3. Identification of appropriate ways to promote on the ground the implementation of the CCD in synergy with other Conventions.
4. Identification and transfer of appropriate, cost effective, clean techniques and practices.
5. Making the best possible use of the existing financial resources to achieve synergies, and - at a later stage - assessment of the funding procedures .
6. Promotion of a participatory approach and involvement of all stakeholders, including civil society organisations.
7. Considering debt swap for environment improvement.

On the basis of the above, the following recommendations were made:

1. National Action Programmes (NAPs) to combat desertification and Subregional Action Programmes (SRAPs) should provide for synergies with other relevant Conventions.
2. Integrated pilot projects should be promoted, based on participatory approach, to contribute to implementation, increase visibility and help in identifying eventual gaps.

3. Such projects and programmes should take into account socio-economic aspects and be based on further scientific analysis;
4. Networking of existing information mechanisms should be encouraged to allow for exchange of relevant, comparable, and reliable data, in view of implementing the CCD at Mediterranean level in synergy with other Conventions;
5. Synergies should be extended towards other existing Mediterranean fora (MAP, MCSD, EURO-MED Partnership), and main donors (World Bank, EIB, etc) to ensure achievement of objectives in a sustainable way.

Participants expressed their willingness to continue collaboration and exchange of experiences on these topics at Mediterranean level.

Attachment 4

Mediterranean Conference
THE PARTICIPATION OF MEDITERRANEAN NGOs IN NATIONAL PROGRAMMES TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION AND DROUGHT - Land use and sustainable development in the Mediterranean
Murcia, 16 - 18 June 2000

CONCLUSIONS, PROPOSALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF NGOs ON THE PARTICIPATION OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN COMBATTING DESERTIFICATION AND DROUGHT IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

On the basis of the questionnaires filled in by NGOs, the debates held in the context of working groups during the Mediterranean Conference and speakers' contributions, the following Conclusions, Proposals and Recommendations of NGOs on the participation of civil society in combating desertification and drought in the Mediterranean were adopted.

Conclusions

- The conference attendants denounced the lack of NGO participation in drawing up, implementing and evaluating the National Action Programmes to combat desertification and the effects of drought in the majority of Mediterranean states, and in the drawing up of the annual National Reports sent to the Conference of the Parties.

- Of Annexe IV of the northern Mediterranean, only Italy and Portugal have made headway on the process of drawing up their National Action Programme to combat desertification (NAP), whereas Spain, Greece and Turkey have only drawn up the "Guidelines" which will serve as a basis for their respective programmes. The remainder of southern and eastern Mediterranean countries do not have a NAP.

- The work of NGOs to combat desertification is carried out on two levels - on-the-spot work in the form of small-scale projects with the base communities affected and a task of networking or coalition with other NGOs to reinforce lobbying work with various government agencies and international organisations.

- Most of the participating NGOs consider that the degree of representativeness of the base communities and citizens is only average. This does however allow them to successfully carry out the task of providing an interface between the base communities and the authorities or international organisations.

- Appreciation was expressed of the work carried out by MED Forum on outlining policies, lines of action and good practices projects to combat desertification, in the form of the Mediterranean Environment Forum, the MED Forum Agenda 2000 and the Negev Desert Declaration. It was also proposed that the positive experiences of other NGOs and Mediterranean networks be employed.

- The NGOs called for clearly specified financing for their projects to combat erosion and desertification and promote rural development, and stressed the need for partnerships with local authorities.

- It is necessary to inform, sensitise and educate people about good practices for combating desertification and the effects of drought, and provide training to establish links between the solutions put forward from different fields (political, technical and economic).

- The NGOs stated that a solid scientific base is needed in order to draw up proposals for action, and that close collaboration should be established with the universities and scientific and technical research centres.

- The participants stated that the fight against desertification cannot be separated from the rational management of natural resources and that territorial planning should be based on criteria of sustainability.

- Policies to combat desertification and the effects of drought require the acceptance of the community and, in many cases, immediate interests go against a rational use of the territory. In this sense, the protection of natural spaces has shown itself to be clearly compatible with and even beneficial to the maintenance of sustainable land use.

- An important challenge is to find a way for the community to contribute to financing the costs of managing rural spaces. To date, sustainable agriculture has met the costs, though rural spaces generate indirect benefits for society as a whole.

- There is a duality between intensive farming which depletes natural resources and a traditional form of agriculture which allows for their conservation, but which calls for urgent measures if the present serious crisis is to be overcome. The incorporation of new sustainable technologies and the multipurpose use of agricultural spaces is presented as one possible solution to the problem. The introduction of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and intensive farming as an alternative is *rejected*.

- Our recognition of the important role of farming in the conservation of natural and cultural diversity means that we have to dignify traditional practices and knowledge and promote dialogue between all the agents involved.

- The scientific community expresses its concern at the lack of practical application of scientific advances and their incorporation into policies and action programmes. It expresses the need to establish prevention mechanisms (like early warning systems) to control and mitigate the processes of desertification.

- There is a need for dialogue between the different sectors affected, and consensus when it comes to deciding on policies and action programmes.

- Land conservation has to be seen as an integral part of territorial management and include participation and the control of decisions by social groups in the themes of territorial planning and management.

- A development model has to be promoted to allow integrated, sustainable management of resources, including land and water, and prevent speculation being imposed in the management and organisation of the territory. It is therefore necessary to support local government agencies against the pressure of speculation, and to control and denounce corrupt practices.

- The proposal of a participatory process to draw up Agendas 21 at all levels to define models of territorial management and organisation, conservation and integrated management of land, integrated sustainable management of coastal zones and to establish participatory forms of combating desertification.

The Conference also considered MED Forum's Proposals and recommendations of NGOs on the participation of civil society in combating desertification and drought in the Mediterranean, and gave its support to these initiatives, which can be summarized as follows:

Recommendations

To the Conference of the Convention, its Annexes and the contracting party States:

1. to make progress in the implementation of an Inter-Regional Mediterranean Action Programme, drawn up and applied in collaboration with other regions or subregions' programmes, on the basis of a spirit of international solidarity and association, with a view to improving cooperation and co-ordination at sub-regional, regional and international level, to channel financial, human, organizational and technical resources where they are most needed, by means of a "Mediterranean regional initiative to combat desertification";

2. to establish a suitable forum for exchange, participation and co-ordination to promote the "Mediterranean regional initiative to combat desertification", which will allow progress towards the creation of an Inter-Regional Mediterranean Action Programme. Other existing forums could be employed for this purpose, such as the Mediterranean Commission of Sustainable Development (MCSD);

3. for NGOs actively involved in combating desertification and particularly their networks, such as MED Forum, to take an active part in drawing up, implementing and evaluating the Regional Action Programme of the northern Mediterranean in organizations of co-ordination which already exist and/or are constituted to this effect. This same measure will be applied to the Sub-regional Action Programmes being drawn up for other areas in the southern and eastern Mediterranean;

4. representatives of national NGOs and other sectors must take an active part in drawing up, implementing and evaluating the National Action Programmes and drawing up National Reports to combat desertification and the effects of drought by forming part of National Committees to combat desertification and the effects of drought.

Proposals

To members of MED Forum and other Mediterranean NGOs:

1. the realization by MED Forum NGOs of a campaign of communication, sensitization and environmental education in the Mediterranean basin, specifically on desertification and the effects of drought, directed at the main economic and social agents involved;

2. the realization of a programme of capacity-building and training in the administration of natural resources directed at the main economic and social agents involved, decision-makers and government specialists. By:

   a. organizing conferences, seminars, etc for the exchange of experiences and good practices and publication of the most significant experiences;

   b. producing sectoral guides to environmental management and intervention d directed at preventing, controlling and mitigating the causes and effects of desertification and drought.

3. the drawing up of a Mediterranean Charter for the sustainable management of the territory to combat desertification and the effects of drought, leading to the creation of a network made up of the signatory bodies and organizations which undertake to apply its contents: NGOs, farmers, stock-keepers, companies, consumer associations, universities, research centres, local government agencies, regional governments, etc.;

4. the celebration of "Mediterranean Day to combat desertification and the effects of drought" every 17 June, on the basis of the "Murcia Manifesto" read in the context of the badlands of Los Barrancos de Gebar (Murcia/Spain) in different Mediterranean languages by representatives of MED Forum NGOs, States and the Secretariat of the Convention;

5. the carrying out of Mediterranean-scale projects to combat desertification and the effects of drought in order to encourage and co-ordinate the initiatives of the different countries, promote co-operation and co-development and bring a joint front to the specific problems which exist throughout the basin.

Proposals for regional projects to be carried out by MED Forum NGOs and other bodies:

- regional project on "Participatory water management in Mediterranean arid regions", to be carried out in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Israel and Palestine;

- regional project "For sustainable tourism in the Mediterranean", to encourage sustainable land management, reduce the overexploitation of resources and promote agro-tourism or tourism in rural areas to prevent the land being abandoned;

- regional project on the "Conservation of terraces in the Mediterranean region" as a traditional method of combating erosion, conserving fertile land and preserving the landscape;
- regional project on "Maintenance of sustainable land uses and protection of biodiversity in semiarid zones";
- regional project on "Fair trade and combating desertification in the Mediterranean";
- regional project on a "Mediterranean school of sustainable agriculture", based at a training centre in Morocco.

Murcia, 18 June 2000